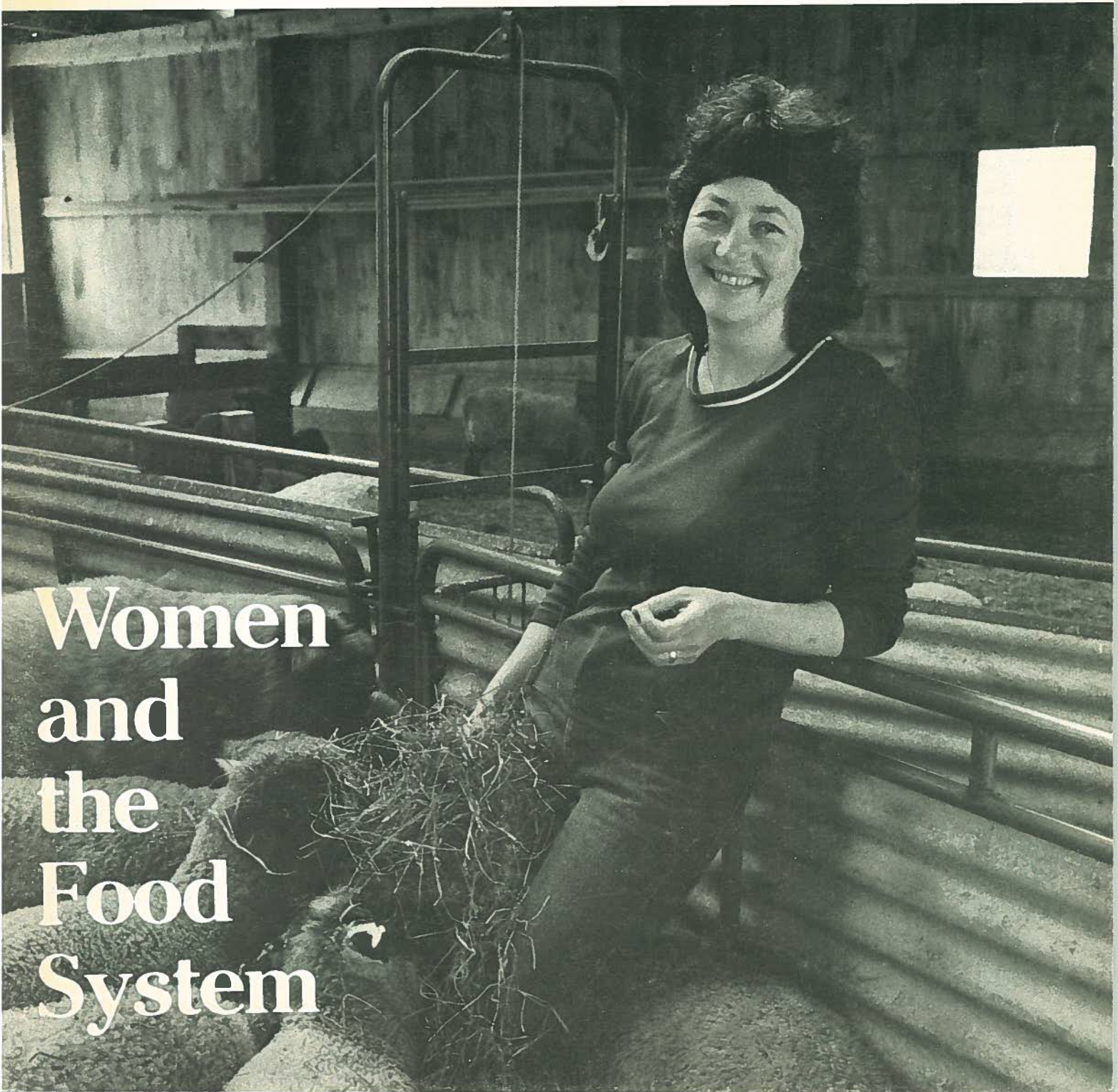


Spring, 1987
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Healthsharing

A CANADIAN WOMEN'S HEALTH QUARTERLY



**Women
and
the
Food
System**

Vol 8:2

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Collective Members
Elizabeth Amer, Amyra Braha,
Connie Clement, Susan Elliott,
Deborah Feinstadt, Alice Grange,
Connie Guberman, Diana Majury,
Lisa McCaskell

Coordinating Editor
Connie Guberman

Production Coordinator
Susan Elliott

Administration
Connie Clement, Katie Pellizzari

Promotion/Circulation
Connie Guberman, Cindy Barron,
Theresa Wright

Design/Production
Collective members, Jill Cameron, Ida
Wellwood, Mary Margaret Crapper,
Linda Lounsberry, Barbara Muirhead,
Pam Bristol, Katie Pellizzari, Theresa
Wright

Advertising
Elizabeth Amer

Copy Editing/Proofing
Elizabeth Allemang, Amy Gottlieb

Typesetting
Lynne Fernie/Type A

Printing
Delta Web Graphics

Cover Photograph by
Pamela Harris

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COLLECTIVE NOTES

Food Connections

Our collective discussion for this issue fell on the anniversary of last year's major chemical spill at a Dow Chemical plant in Bhopal, India. It seems ironic and sad, but at the same time fitting, that we should be discussing 'eco-feminism' on this day. Bhopal and Chernobyl have captured global attention, but similar events happen each and every day on a smaller, local scale.

Each of us within the collective is overwhelmed by the extent of environmental hazards. Within each of us a chord is struck: we are filled with nostalgic longing for a time gone by when our earth was clean and our air was fresh. (A time we know never truly existed in the way of our emotional dreams.) We notice that the hope of regaining a paradise lost is a widespread feeling.

The proliferation of so-called lifestyle behaviours — exercise in every imaginable form, pure food, and a national preoccupation with baking muffins — is partly a reflection of the effort to regain the paradise. People strive to get their own lives in order; many believe that with their individual effort the world will fall into place again. Recoiling from the apparent impossibility of reversing environmental contamination and the threat of nuclear annihilation, people seek recourse by finding personal behaviours which allow the perception of individual and world healthiness. Although politically limited, these personal actions and individual statements of what might be, *can* be potent gestures.

This thematic issue on food and gardening is something of a departure for *Healthsharing*. And yet the link to health is clear. As early as the late 1700s, the health benefits of working in gardens was noticed. It was customary at that time for poor hospitalized patients to maintain the hospital kitchen garden in lieu of payment. The clients who worked in the garden got

well more quickly than the often wealthier clients who did not.

In this issue we share with readers some of the personal actions which give our own members pleasure and sustenance. Included are an article about herbal baths, hints on how to scavenge nutritious salads from waste areas and unruly gardens, and tips about gardening with the least physical strain. We hope each of these pieces offers practical advice and new information.

Much of what is written about in these articles was fairly commonplace knowledge among our mothers or grandmothers. For most of us today, though, choosing to obtain food from the 'wild' is a luxury. Even for the majority of rural poor it is not a practical or commonly used source of nourishment. Yet in seeking such knowledge, in creating the time to tend a garden or to gather food, you might touch upon women's history. Everywhere in the world women have been gatherers to men the hunters.

We used to be the growers, the processors, the distributors *and* the preparers of food. But not any more in this country. The industrialization of food businesses has severed the intimate links between each stage from growing to eating. Cathleen Kneen's article looks at the Canadian end of the global agribusiness. She makes it clear that simply changing what you eat won't alter the system. Personal solutions can be one step in becoming more aware, but they don't in and of themselves change the system.

Popular educators start at the place of the individual and work toward an understanding of larger social issues. The supermarket tour, described in *Food for Profit*, is a model created to help people to learn by analyzing the produce in their local supermarkets. To understand agribusiness, it helps to figure out how you personally fit in.

Community gardening, written about by Joan Riggs, can be an educational tool and a small-scale action to side-step the confines of agribusiness. The power of community gardens lies not so much in their ability to provide food, but in the social gathering place they offer to communities. Establishing small scale, manageable groups for direct action is the first step of any national or international alliance. By working within our neighbourhoods to create change *and* learn about the food system, our local groups can begin the task of establishing common goals and actions.

The Nestle boycott provides an example of a successful broad-based action. Nestle, a Swiss multinational, came under attack for its marketing of infant formulas. To promote milk substitutes in developing countries the company panned breast-feeding, supplied vast quantities of free samples and used pseudo-medical staff. The formula was impractical and outrageously expensive; its inappropriate use resulted in widespread malnourishment of children in the Third World.

It was women who led the international boycott of Nestle products, a decade-long boycott which resulted in improved marketing practices, worldwide attention and the involvement of numerous governments. The boycott was a watershed leading the way toward mass consumer actions about other health and social issues. It shows us that the global economic system controlled by multinationals *can* be affected if we learn to think big.

Elizabeth Amer, Amyra Braha, Connie Clement, Susan Elliott, Deborah Feinstadt, Alice Grange, Connie Guberman, Diana Majury, Lisa McCaskell.



Terri Robertson

LETTERS

Healthsharing reserves the option to print letters edited for length, unless they are marked 'not for publication.'

We encourage readers to write. Your debate is just as vital as the original articles and columns published in the magazine. Please take the time to share your opinions with other readers.

Delightful start

At long last, not just one article, but a whole issue devoted to menopause. A delightful way to start the new year — thank you.

One option available to readers which was not

mentioned in your Books Available . . . was that some of these may be in your local library. I was pleased to find that three, Alice Lake's *Our Own Years*, and Rosetta Reitz' *Menopause: A Positive Approach*, as well as *Menopause Naturally* by Sadja Greenwood are available at my (small) local library. For those of us on budgets, an inexpensive way of helping ourselves.

Keep up the great work!

*Diana Gault
Sidney, B.C.*

HRT defended

I read with interest your comments about the use of female hormones post-menopausally as part of therapy to diminish, postpone or prevent osteoporosis.

I am afraid there was a perception that physicians are "pushing" hormones on post-menopausal women and somehow because this is "unnatural" and does not accept menopause as "a normal part of the aging process," that this therapy is inappropriate.

As a geriatrician with a wide clinical experience in the disastrous effects of osteoporosis, and a theoretical and personal experience of observation of the beneficial effects of long-term hormone therapy, I think that some of the issues have been presented by you in a biased fashion.

There are many conditions that may be associated with aging, but for which intervention may have a benefit. These include modifications of lifestyle, such

as appropriate diet and exercise, cessation of smoking and avoidance of substance abuse. In addition however, there may be conditions such as osteoporosis that might benefit greatly from the judicious use of cyclical hormone therapy.

The use of such hormone therapy does not in any way discount the reality of the menopause, which, of course, is a physiological function. It does, however, acknowledge the fact that osteoporosis occurs commonly in older women and can have a most devastating effect on their lives. It turns out that therapeutic intervention, in this case in the form of hormones, have a beneficial effect on preventing or diminishing the effect of osteoporosis.

Such therapeutic interventions are commonly accepted in medicine; for other conditions. The control of hypertension by medications has been accepted as an effective method of diminishing heart failure and strokes, during one's later years. In many ways, late onset osteoporosis is similar. Certainly for many women who are at risk, appropriate diet and physical activity programs will not be sufficient to prevent osteoporosis. Cyclical hormones which have been demonstrated to be extremely safe and I expect in the future will be shown to be even safer than we presently believe, can have a most beneficial effect on what might otherwise be a most devastating condition, that can impair the enjoyment of life, or even lead to premature death in older women.

*Michael Gordon, M.D.
North York, Ont.*

Television programme

Thank you (and Anne Rochon Ford) for the complimentary copy of the Healthsharing Special Menopause Issue. I was particularly pleased to see

articles by Anne, Sidney Thomson and Ann Voda who all took part (with great success) in a documentary special I have just finished producing for TVOntario on female reproductive cycles and women's roles in society, both today and over the last 150 years. The programme, which is part of TVOntario's *Vista* series, is called *See-Saw Margery-Daw*, and it will be broadcast on the TVOntario network on Monday, March 9 at 8:00 p.m. It will also be made available on cassette from TVO and to other networks across Canada and the U.S. for broadcast.

I think that Healthsharing contributors and readers would find *See-Saw Margery-Daw* worth an hour of their television viewing time.

*Paula Salvador
Toronto, Ont.*

Healing by reading

Please send me the menopause copy of *Healthsharing* before I lose my mind, my family and my customers.

*Sandra Wilson
Mississauga, Ont.*

PID

Maureen Moore's article *PID: The Silent Epidemic* (Spring, 1986) is an important step in alerting the public to this often neglected disease.

I have suffered from a pelvic infection for 1-1/2 years. I have not received a culture indicating the nature of the infection and this makes treatment even more complicated. I had to search for months to find doctors who understood the nature and current treatments for PID.

Unfortunately, knowledge about how to cure PID is still limited. I believe raising people's consciousness to the extent of this problem might inspire more research and hence improve treatments available.

Thank you for publishing this desperately needed article.
*Ronna Weiss
New York City, N.Y.*

Our Cover Photo . . .



Cathleen Kneen, one of the authors in this issue, is photographed by Pamela Harris for our cover. The photo shows Cathleen in 1985 at her sheep farm near Scotsboro, Nova Scotia. Cathleen relocated to Toronto in fall, 1986 where she is now working for the Latin American Working Group.

Flashes and tingling feet

Most certainly, if you have anything new to offer in the way of overcoming hot flashes I will be eternally grateful.

You will note I do not say "living with" hot flashes for I find them totally unlivable-with, together with their gawd-awful tingling middle-of-the-night feet.

I have a doctor who, herself, doesn't know which way to turn. I take estrogen (and have for some years) and when I asked her about progesterone as well, which I had been reading about, she merely threw her hands up in the air and said that no two groups could decide which was the proper route to take.

For myself, the calcium loss is NOTHING compared to what I would have to go through with the flashes and tingling feet without HRT.

*Pat McPhee
Islington, Ontario*

Positive perspective

Being a feminist in medical school, I find *Healthsharing* to be valuable in keeping my perspective. Unlike Kirsten Emmott (*Letters*, Winter 1986) I think I'll keep subscribing forever!

Keep up the good work.
*Margaret Clark
Hamilton, Ont.*

Bladder Infections

I was pleased to see that in your article about bladder infections (Spring, 1986), you mentioned cranberry juice. I used to get constant bladder infections but now I take a small amount of cranberry juice every morning, and it has not been a problem for me for at least a year now. The most economic route is the frozen juice in cans.

No more anti-biotics for me. I feel great.
S.R.

Langley, B.C.

MD, a real find

Enclosed you will find a cheque for two subscriptions. I am so pleased with your publication that I thought it

appropriate to share it with my family doctor who, like Healthsharing, is a real find. Your magazine definitely fills a void in our health care system by providing the public with information which is rarely disseminated by the mainstream media, or by practitioners themselves. I commend you for your excellent work and offer my continued support for your endeavours.

Sharon Hyman

Montreal

AIDS, female circumcision and African Women

The spread of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in Africa may be connected to the practice of female genital mutilation according to an anthropologist at the University of California.

Uli Linke, a doctoral candidate at the University of California at Berkeley has been struck by the fact that the epidemiological pattern of AIDS in Africa, where the disease strikes men and women equally, differs from that in the United States where it affects predominantly intravenous drug users and homosexual men.

As she read the literature on AIDS, Linke noticed a "prevailing assumption that the same cultural factors were at work in the transmission of AIDS in Africa as those in Europe and the United States — namely, sexual promiscuity, the use of unclean hypodermic needles and homosexuality. None of these factors explain why an equal number of men and women contract the disease in Central Africa."

The transmission of AIDS cannot happen without the exchange of body fluids, particularly blood, "which gave me the idea that it might be related to female circumcision," Linke says.

This fact has disastrously increased the dangers that have befallen millions of African women who practice

female circumcision and has prompted an urgent need to eradicate the barbarous practice.

We of the Women's Centre have experienced the dangers inherent in the practice and have vehemently condemned its continuation. We have persistently called upon various African governments to legislate against this tradition, but only one country, Sudan, to our knowledge, has legislation against female genital mutilation and no action has been taken to enforce the legislation.

We have recently taken the first local initiative to launch a massive education campaign by home visits, countryside enlightenment tours, newspapers, radio, television, seminars and workshops against the practice; and the campaign is now in progress. But as a non-governmental, self supporting voluntary organization without a sound financial base, we have no money to run the campaign to a successful end. We had earlier appealed to all our womenfolk, groups, networks and organizations around the world to come to our aid by donating to the campaign fund, but unfortunately the response has not been encouraging. So far over 90,000 people have died of AIDS in Africa since 1984 and three quarters of this number are women. We are convinced that their deaths may be connected to genital mutilation as the research

study revealed.

We therefore, once again appeal through your journal to all your readers, particularly your womenfolk, other interested persons'ovroups and organizations to come to our aid. Our greatest problem is lack of funds to run the campaign. Many of our rural women are suffering from dangerous and superstitious practices — some with long traditions such as female circumcision — because they lack the practical information that could change their lives. We shall accept donations by cash (banknotes), personal cheques or bank drafts in any currency. We shall also accept material aid such as projectors, films, cassettes, electrical equipment, books and literature. Please help us to combat female genital mutilation; help us to fight against the spread of AIDS among African women. For together, we shall succeed.
*Mrs. Hannah Edemikpong
Women's Centre
Box 185, Eket
Cross River State, Nigeria
West Africa*

Correction

The biographical note for Ann Voda, author of "Cool News for Hot Flashers" (Winter, 1986) should have read: Ann Voda is a Professor of Physiological Nursing at the University of Utah and Director of Tremin Trust.



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UPDATE

Patent drug act

No gain is being made to stop the passage of the Patent Drug Act. The Act, a government sponsored bill intended for tabling in June 1985, was finally introduced to Parliament in October, 1986. The bill outlines major changes in pharmaceutical manufacturing. Most importantly it establishes a 10 year period before a generic drug firm can begin to copy a newly introduced brandname drug.

Harvie Andre, Minister of Consumer Affairs, argues that the bill will bring new jobs to Canada by increasing drug research and development. Non-government estimates of investments, however, are exceedingly low and the bill does not require manufacturing by multinational pharmaceuticals to be undertaken in Canada.

While providing jobs in a few locations, the changes are likely to increase drug costs for all Canadians. Existing legislation, passed in 1969, which supports the Canadian-based generic drug industry provides a progressive model for other countries. According to figures from the Canadian Health Coalition, generic competition is estimated to have saved consumers \$211 million in 1983 alone, with savings to provincial drug plans above and beyond this figure. Estimates of increased cost vary; \$75 million annually was

admitted by Michel Cote, past Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. The government belies its current assurances of no additional costs, by building into the act \$100 million in transfer payments to the provinces to help off-set increased costs. A pricing review board, which had minimal authority in the Act's first version, has lost authority in the existing draft Act.

The Parliamentary Committee debating the Patent Drug Act had established January 15, 1987 as the final date for receipt of briefs. Although the NDP caucus pushed hard for an extension, the deadline was kept. Many organizations have joined the fight against the Patent Drug Act — the Canadian Health Coalition, development organizations, the Consumer Association of Canada, churches, and most recently major unions such as CUPE.

The bill may come back to the house as early as March or April, 1987. It is important that women's organizations and health groups encourage members to lobby against the bill and attempt to gain local media coverage of the issues. A kit about the Patent Drug Act with a focus on women and health can be ordered from the Canadian Health Coalition (2841 Riverside Dr., Ottawa K1V 8X7; 613-521-3400).

WHS

Canadian women's health network

Formation of a pan-Canadian women's health network is under way. The first meeting of a representative steering committee was held in Toronto on February 6 and 7, 1987. The network is envisioned to improve communication and information sharing nationally, to link women and women's organizations to resources across Canada and to facilitate educational outreach and coordination of national actions on critical and immediate health problems.

The first meeting in Toronto brought together representatives of different constituencies of women, based on geographic location, language, race and culture, and physical ability.

A participatory model to develop the network is planned. During the spring of 1987 the steering committee members will return to their constituencies in various parts of Canada and assist in planning regional meetings. The regional meetings are the key component in the early development stages. It is at regional meetings that women will define critical health issues of concern to them, outline needs and desires for a national network and choose representatives for a national planning meeting in mid-fall.

The October, 1987 national planning meeting will develop proposals for structure and action; the proposals will once again go back to regional and local meetings. During a two year period most organizational work will take place at local and regional locals. Should anticipated funding be received, a paid coordinator will be kept on throughout the three year development process.

Women involved in the

following organizations took part in the first planning meeting and can be contacted for further information: Labrador Native Women's Association, the health committee of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Women's Health Education Network (N.S.), Federation nationale des femmes Canadiennes françaises, Regroupement de centre de sante des femmes, Naissance/Renaissance, DisAbled Women's Network, Indian and Inuit Nurses Association, Women Healthsharing, DES Action, Women's Health Interaction, Northwestern Ontario Women's Health Education Project, Women Today, National Immigrant & Visible Minority Women's Organizations, Women's Health Interaction — Manitoba, Regina Healthsharing, Calgary Women's Health Collective, Vancouver Women's Health Collective and Victoria-Faulkner Women's Centre.

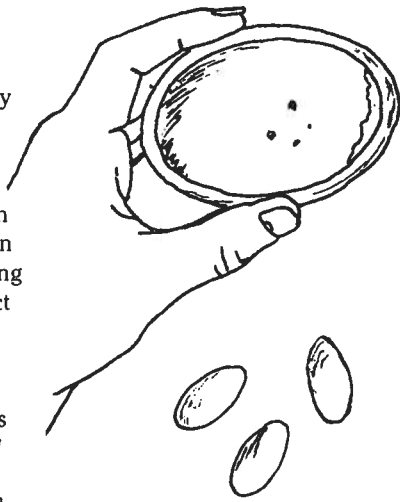
Groups not attending the planning meeting are encouraged to contact another organization in order to share in planning regional meetings throughout the spring and early summer. Additional information can also be obtained from Women's Health Interaction, which is undertaking the major organizing role during this early stage of network development. They can be reached at 58 Arthur St., Ottawa K1R 7B9 (613-563-4801). The next newsletter of Women's Health Interaction will focus on the Canadian Women's Health Network.

WHS

Spermicide rots diaphragms

Pharmatex Ovule, a spermicidal suppository, destroys rubber! The suppository, manufactured by Interpharm Pharmaceutical Products, Inc. of Laval, Quebec, is approved for sale throughout Canada, although most of its current sales are in Quebec. The package labelling recommends that the product be used with a barrier contraceptive (diaphragm or condom.)

To make Pharmatex ovules the active ingredient (*Benzenolium*) is fused with cocoa butter. Cocoa butter, unlike the bases used in most other suppositories, is not water soluble and destroys latex. To make matters worse, the cocoa butter can't be easily washed off with soap, and so a residue builds on the diaphragm used in conjunction with the suppository. The same could be true of Rendalls, another suppository sold in Canada even though family planners have advised that it be removed from the market because of poor effectiveness. During the spring of 1985, Dr.



Louise Savoie, a family planning physician in Matane, Quebec, fitted a client with a diaphragm and Pharmatex ovule suppositories. It wasn't long before the client returned with holes in her diaphragm. A letter to the company resulted only in a cursory letter advising Savoie that Pharmatex should be used alone; the company planned no action or study. Dismayed with the inadequate response, she wrote the company again and then sent the government

a copy of the correspondence. A letter from the company promising a study into the problem was written to Savoie on July 16, 1985. That's the last Savoie heard.

When Women Healthsharing phoned the company in December, 1986, Magued Wasfy, the company's clinical officer, told us this was the first time they'd heard of their product eroding the rubber of diaphragms. "Pharmatex ovule should be used alone," he said. Wasfy admitted the package advised use with a barrier, but argued that the government had requested such labelling.

The government has been slow to respond to the complaints from Savoie and others. They did assign staff in both the prescription drugs and medical devices units to examine the problem. According to one of the government staff examining the case, by the second use of a diaphragm with Pharmatex, there is an 80 per cent decrease in tensile properties of the rubber; by the second or third use the diaphragm membrane begins to separate from the spring. No one knows how long it takes Pharmatex to

erode condoms, but decay is possible during a single use, especially if the condom remains on for sometime after exposure to the spermicide.

This is no minor problem, yet the government has taken no action except to write the company requesting that Pharmatex ovule labelling be rewritten to suggest use without barrier methods. Dr. Ferrier, from the Drug Directorate at Health & Welfare, supported the delay in action, arguing that the government "cannot descend on someone without real evidence." But it appears the first similar complaint to government (about Rendalls) was in 1974!

What is required is not a change in labelling, but withdrawal of Pharmatex ovule from the market. Although it does not pose immediate *physical* danger to users, Pharmatex entails too great a risk of failure and misuse. Canadian women need access to good contraceptive suppositories, not suppositories which rot rubber. Once again legislation and government practice is inadequate.

Don't use Pharmatex ovules.

Calgary active despite low funds

The Calgary Women's Health Collective will be offering another menopause support group, despite lessened funding and the possibility of losing office space.

Since early winter, the Calgary Women's Health Collective has had an office in the Women's Resource and Therapy Centre. Instead of working out of someone's home, they have had a public setting and access to additional resources and meeting space.

Currently the centre itself is seeking new funding to remain open, according to Deborah Jehn of the Calgary Collective.

During 1987, a very successful menopause program was offered. With one collective member taking part, participants formed a support and learning group over several weeks. Because of demand another series will be started during the winter.

WHS

Healthsharing readers: protest postal increase!

The government in Ottawa is threatening to withdraw its support of Canadian magazines over the next five years by eliminating existing postal tariff and tax-related incentives. If they do, magazines like *Healthsharing* will no longer be able to afford to publish.

A 15 per cent increase in all postage has been announced for 1987. This hike is not as high as publishers originally feared but it represents the beginning of measures which could eventually prove fatal for many Canadian magazines.

The Minister of Communications must hear from our readers. Please write to Flora MacDonald and explain why your magazine is important to you and to thousands of other Canadian readers. No postage is necessary when letters are addressed to Ms. MacDonald or any M.P. at House of Commons, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa K1A 0A6. Please send a copy of your letter to your own M.P.

L-tryptophan and PMS

Research from California reports a connection between PMS and sleep disorders including a history of bed-wetting as a child. Sleep disorders occur when a person gets an insufficient amount of "rapid eye movement" or REM sleep — the kind of sleep during which dreams occur. Symptoms of the deprivation of REM sleep are identical to those experienced by women with PMS, ie. irritability, depression, hostility, fatigue and emotional outbursts. REM sleep is promoted by the neurotransmitter serotonin which in turn relies upon the amino acid L-tryptophan for its production.

When PMS sufferers increased their intake of L-tryptophan and made sure they got 8 hours of sleep per night, both their sleep and their symptoms improved dramatically. *Medical Self Care* reports that out of 235 women trying this regimen all but two reported "significant relief."

Mary Margaret Steckle from

Toronto's PMS Information and Referral Service points out that the beneficial effects of L-tryptophan have been recognized for at least 4 years, but, although many women have experienced relief with it, few Canadian doctors are aware of it. Steckle advocates self directed action. She advises women to educate themselves by speaking to nutritionists at their local public health unit about nutritional guidelines, exercise and stress reduction all of which also improve sleep. If these steps are not enough to relieve symptoms, then L-tryptophan could be considered. She also recommends *The PMS Solution*, a Canadian book by Dr. Anne Nazzaro, Dr. Donald Lombard and Dr. D. Horribin (Eden Press, Montreal 1985), that explains a nutritional approach to PMS.

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Dalkon Shield Action

In the fall of 1986, Dalkon Shield Action Canada was formed as the most recent response to help women who used the Dalkon Shield, an intrauterine device linked with pelvic inflammatory disease, miscarriage and hysterectomy.

With a special issue and mailing of *Health Matters*, the Vancouver Women's Health Collective announced three objectives for the new organization: to provide information and support; to develop a national registry of lawyers with expertise to handle Dalkon Shield cases; to establish a team of lawyers to handle cases on a group basis.

In August, 1985, more than

ten years after the Dalkon was taken off the market, the manufacturer A.H. Robins filed for bankruptcy protection as a means of limiting rocketing litigation costs related to Dalkon Shield damages. In granting Robins pre-bankruptcy status, the U.S. courts set a deadline for Dalkon Shield related claims to be filed. Approximately 330,000 claims were submitted by the April 30, 1986 deadline, a number far exceeding estimates. However, publicity about the court process was minimal in Canada. Because of this 44 Canadian claims were submitted for each 1,000 estimated Dalkons fitted, as

Chlamydia linked to adult eye infections

Chlamydia Trachomatis, a microorganism which is probably the leading cause of sexually transmitted diseases (STD), also causes eye infections. The incidence of non-genital infections in adults has been thought to be extremely uncommon. A 1986 study in Montreal found higher than expected incidence, however. At Hotel-Dieu de Montreal STD clinic, of 159 patients with both eye and genital infections, nearly 20 per cent had *Chlamydia* in both sites, according to the November 29 *Canada Diseases Weekly Report*.

By comparison, a 1985 World Health Organization virus surveillance program found only 2.1 per cent of site specific

Chlamydia to be in the eye out of nearly 8,000 cases. Most of the cases at Hotel-Dieu were thought to be self-transmitted from one site to the other.

The findings pose implications for STD programs. Questions about eye infections should become part of screening. As well, individuals found to have *Chlamydia* conjunctivitis (eye infection) should be tested for STD. Treatment for eye infections with antibiotics requires a more prolonged regimen than genital tract infections, and screening of partners for eye and genital infections may sometimes be in order.

WHS

compared with 129 per 1,000 U.S. claims.

Last spring, the Vancouver Women's Health Collective and the Women's Health Clinic in Winnipeg went to court, arguing that bias had been shown against non-Americans and requesting an extension in the court deadline. Although the judge hearing the case refused to grant standing, he did make a very slight extension in deadline. By allowing an April 30th postmark, rather than receipt on April 30th, 19,000 additional claims from around the world were accepted by the court.

The court process is in a shambles because of the number of claims received. According to one U.S. lawyer who has been fighting for financial compensation for users for a decade, lawyers representing the claimants are now arguing among

themselves about the benefits or drawbacks of requesting a new judge, re-opening acceptance of claims from outside the U.S. and how to even begin the process of weighing various claims. All this debating is eating into the pot of money established by the court to pay claimants. The next lawyers' meeting, for instance, will be in Las Vegas — promotional literature about activities for spouses has already been sent out!

Dalkon Shield Action Canada can be contacted at 888 Burrard St., Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 1X9, or by telephoning the Vancouver Women's Health Collective at 603-682-4805. A \$15 membership payment (\$10 low income) includes a subscription to *Health Matters*, the newsletter of the Vancouver Women's Health Collective.

WHS

GRAPE BOYCOTT IS BACK

A recent study by the World Resources Institute, an American research group, estimates that more than 300,000 farm workers in the United States are being poisoned by pesticides each year.

The United Farm Workers of America (UFW), the union representing farm workers in the states, are organizing in Toronto and Vancouver and planning Montreal organizing. The UFW is building support for an international grape boycott.

One organizer in Toronto, Sandy Martinez, says the union has chosen to boycott Californian grapes because of the large amount of chemicals used in the vineyards. The UFW claims that not only are farm workers being poisoned, their children are born deformed. Communities surrounding large vineyards are now recognized as cancer cluster locations by the California State Health and

Food Department.

Martinez says there is no conclusive evidence yet of danger to consumers who eat the grapes.

The UFW has produced a powerful 15 minute film entitled *The Grapes of Wrath* documenting the effects of pesticide poisoning on farm workers and neighbouring townspeople. Women who worked in the fields during pregnancy said they were not notified when chemicals were being sprayed. Many of those interviewed for the film now have children with severe birth defects; many were born with cancer, others without arms or legs. The women are blaming the deformities on the chemicals they were exposed to in the fields.

"We tried to get a law passed for the growers to post when they are spraying the fields. Three multi-million dollar companies say it's too expensive," says Martinez. She, as well as the parents of sick



Jenny Farkas

children who live close to the vineyards, believe that water supplies are contaminated. Chemicals, sprayed on fields by low flying planes, are believed to leach into drinking water.

The UFW wants consumers to stop buying California grapes until three demands are met. They want growers to ban four toxic chemicals (Captan, Parathion, Posdrin and Methyl

Bromide). The second demand is for growers to undertake testing jointly with the UFW of pesticide residues on supermarket grapes and publicize the findings. Finally, growers are asked to insure free and fair union elections and bargaining in good faith with farm employees.

MARY MARGARET CRAPPER

Female physicians for sexual assault victims

Female physicians in Halifax-Dartmouth are now offering improved medical support services to victims of sexual assault. As of January first of this year, a roster of female doctors in each city began offering a new, around-the-clock service to ensure that victims are treated and examined by female doctors.

Formation of the two groups was prompted by an information seminar sponsored last year by a local support group, Service for Sexual Assault Victims (SSAV), which revealed that the process of examining women who have been sexually assaulted required significant alteration.

Carole Wackett, the program co-ordinator of SSAV, says that prior to the new system, women were often reluctant to report an assault because they were worried about being examined by male physicians. There were also negative reports about long waiting periods in crowded hospital emergency departments.

According to Dr. Fionella Crombie, the co-ordinator of the 12 member group in Halifax, there were no reports of problems encountered by women who were seen by doctors in emergency, but "we wanted to do better. We wanted to address women's concerns with greater sensitivity."

Dr. Joyce Curtis, Dr. Crombie's counterpart in Dartmouth, says the new arrangement should lead to improvements in many respects. A physician is available to respond to victims medical needs at any time, thereby minimizing trauma, and allowing for examinations to be conducted more quickly and efficiently. Unlike physicians on duty in emergency, the team member can remain with the victim for long periods of time without interruption.

This is important, because beyond the need for an initial examination for physical injuries, the police require that doctors gather forensic

evidence which is necessary for a successful criminal investigation. That process has been simplified with the use of a special forensic kit which was developed in Ontario. It provides for a step-by-step examination protocol for evidence gathering.

According to Carol Wackett of SSAV, these changes, in addition to improved training and education of physicians and greater cooperation between rape crisis volunteers, the police and medical support staff, should encourage more women to report the crime.

ADRIENNE SCOTT

Cathleen Kneen

Women and the Food System



Cathleen Kneen on her Nova Scotia farm

Pamela Harris

Eating is an intimate affair. Even those of us who see health as a public issue tend to privatize questions of food. We worry about the effect of a certain food item or element on the health of the individual, forgetting the effects of the system in which that food item is produced, processed, distributed and prepared for eating.

In previous generations, and even at present in what we choose to call "less-developed" countries, women have been central to the food system at every level. Even today, the majority of Third World farmers are women; indeed, women are virtually in charge of the domestic food economy. In addition to *producing* food by raising livestock and growing vegetables and grains, women are the food *processors*, grinding grain for daily consumption and preserving food for later use. Women control the *distribution* of food within the family, as well as the disposition of surplus. And of course, as everywhere, women are primarily responsible for food *preparation* and nutrition.

In Canada the role of women in farming isn't quite so clear. When my husband and I moved to the farm 15 years ago, I startled some of the neighbours by my insistence on calling myself a 'farmer.' The traditional role of the woman on the farm was certainly what I did: milking a cow, making butter and even sometimes cheese, raising a couple of pigs, a bunch of chickens, and a huge garden, selling off some of the surplus for cash, and pickling, drying, canning, freezing . . . This is the work which in the Third World would be called farming. Here

it's called being a 'farm wife' (or even, a farmer's wife) or at best, a 'farm woman.' A 'farmer' is someone who rides around fields on a tractor.

To be more pointed: *we have stopped defining farming as the production of food.* I produced food for 15 years with the work of my own hands, and I was not considered a farmer. Farming is now *the production of a commodity for sale on the market*, subject to the same forces as any other commodity on the market.

This industrialization of agriculture is devastating at every level in the food system. Starting in the middle, with processing and distribution, industrialization has spread forward to the purchasing level, with the creation of superstores and franchise convenience stores, all controlled by a handful of corporations. It has spread back to primary production, transforming the face of agriculture by increasing the size of farms and radically decreasing the number of farmers. The capitalist belief that the profit motive will solve all problems has been at the base of federal agricultural policy since 1969 when the government's white

paper laying down policy stated:

"... there will be a substantial reduction in the number of commercial farms. Some will be family farms but all will be rationally managed, profit oriented businesses. Farm mergers and consolidation will result in much larger units, not primarily for production efficiency, but to structure units that are large enough to afford better management."

The governing principle which gives the system its logic and coherence is that food is merely a commodity, to be produced and traded for a profit. It is this principle that must be challenged if we want to effect meaningful change in any aspect of the food system.

If food is merely a commodity, social concerns are essentially irrelevant to a consideration of efficiency. At the level of production, then, industrialization involves replacing human labour with machines and chemicals. In many instances mechanization can be a genuine advance (for example, rock-

picking machines). But as part of an industrialization process, mechanization can be the source of great hardship, both for those who remain on the land and for those who are displaced.

It goes like this. Because farmers are producing a commodity for sale, they have to produce enough to get back the amount of money they require — and except for those few areas where there are marketing boards, farmers have no control of the price. (Some of the reasons will appear when we look at distribution and processing.) They can't for example say, it cost six cents to produce this pound of potatoes, so we're charging six cents for it. If the contracted buyer will pay only three cents, the farmers' only recourse is to produce more in order to sell more and receive more money. Bigger and more complex machinery, bought on credit, can help increase the amount one can produce with limited land and human resources; but big machines are not efficient without a uniform crop to work. Chemicals of all kinds: pesticides to kill marauding insects, fungicides to ward off diseases, herbicides to reduce competing

NFB and the Environment



This Borrowed Land
29 minutes — 1984

The Peace River Valley in British Columbia is one of the richest agricultural areas in Canada. The varied and plentiful yields of this area are being threatened as more of its farmland is being converted to uses unrelated to food production. Ruth Veiner, a third-generation farmer, thinks of the land as being borrowed from our children and believes the land should be nurtured for their future use.



Nuclear Addiction: Dr. Rosalie Bertell on the Cost of Deterrence
19 minutes — 1986

A scientist, a Roman-Catholic nun and a world-renowned expert on low-level radiation, Dr. Rosalie Bertell explains the aftermath of nuclear explosions and describes the chain reactions that affect life systems. Powerful footage adds drama and urgency to Dr. Bertell's calm but passionately committed presence. The film ends with her lucid ideas on what we need to do to break the nuclear addiction.

These and other films are available from NFB offices across the country. 16 mm free loan; video rental, all formats, \$2.00



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weeds, hormones to ensure that the whole crop matures at the same time . . . these are an essential part of the modern farmer's struggle to continue to earn enough money from the crop to stay in business.

The link between the industrialization of primary production and distribution, or marketing, is clear. How has distribution itself industrialized? In the Third World village, when a woman has harvested her crop and fed her family, she takes the surplus to market to sell. Food is thus distributed through the community. Even here in North America, it was basically the advent of the refrigerated truck — a fairly recent development — that industrialized the distribution level of the food system. Food no longer needs to be consumed anywhere near where it is produced. The same procedure which was developed for bananas and coffee and sugar now brings tomatoes, grapes and beef across the globe. This means, of course, that food commodities produced here have to compete, in terms of price, with those produced in areas with vastly different climates, labour laws, and pay scales. The local market was once in the hands of local people, predominantly women. The industrialized system is now in the hands of large corporations (often multinational) whose bottom line does not include feeding the family of the food producers — or anyone else, for that matter — except as a side-effect from the disposal of the commodity they are selling.

We begin to see how the system fits together when we consider the opportunities this vastly expanded distribution system offers for profiteering at the primary production level. Instead of dealing with small plots and variegated produce, this mode of distribution offers economies of scale for large plantations producing a uniform crop at set intervals, whether pineapples or beef, which can then be packed, palletized, containerized, and distributed worldwide.

Similarly, in the industrial system, processing is removed from the site of production and of consumption. The simple techniques of canning, freezing and drying, which I practised in my farmhouse kitchen, are speeded up and expanded to an assembly-line procedure to handle the large quantities of uniform products now available.

High technology enters the picture with additives like BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene) which keeps the product from spoiling, thus increasing shelf-life and broadening potential distribution. Physics follows close on the heels of chemistry with irradiation of foods from spices to chicken, again, to reduce spoilage and increase shelf-life.

The last hold-out for local distribution was the dairy industry: milk sold for drinking has been produced close to where it is consumed because of the need for refrigeration. Local surpluses have traditionally been processed into cheese, or milk powder. Now we have UHT: ultra-high temperature treatment of milk which gives it a shelf life, unrefrigerated, of six months.

As processing has become more sophisticated, the last level, food preparation, has also been undergoing changes which tend to remove it from the control of women towards an industrialized mode. The TV dinners which were the mark of the working woman in an earlier generation have now given way to such a staggering array of ready-to-eat foods that more and more of us rely on them. This is a result, not just of advertising, but of the whole industrialized system. We are being pushed out of situations where we could barter our work for the things we needed into the cash economy. As this happens, we depend increasingly on things we can buy to replace the things we no longer have time to make, since our time is taken up with 'making a living.'

According to those who now control the food system, nutrition doesn't suffer at all from this transfer of control. On the contrary, great care is taken to ensure that all *measurable* nutrients which are removed, are added to the packaged product. We have to take it on faith that they haven't missed anything important.

The final effect is that the whole food system, which was once in the hands of women, has been physically removed from our domain, along with the power and control of production, processing, distribution, and preparation.

Just how this happens will become clearer if we take a closer look at the primary production level. The industrial model of red meat production involves huge feedlots full of beef cat-

tle being dosed with growth hormones and fed massive amounts of grains to fatten them for slaughter. But this is a particular mode of beef production which arose only around 1960 or so as a response to a surplus of Western grain. Animals such as beef or sheep can also be raised basically on pasture, in an 'extensive' as opposed to 'intensive' feedlot system.

In an area like the part of Nova Scotia where we were, with abundant rainfall and relatively poor soils, this sort of grassland farming made a lot of sense. It has the advantage of using land which is unsuitable for row or root crops to produce grass which is inedible by humans but great fodder for ruminant animals such as cows or sheep. Manure from livestock is an important way of returning fertility to the soil, and improving the quality of marginal grazing lands.

But the fact of the matter is that we could not opt out of the industrial system if we wanted to make a living from farming, even on a modest scale. To be sure, we were careful to use drugs only as specific remedies for individual animals who were ill (intensive operations often feed antibiotics routinely as 'disease prevention' in with the feed). We went so far as to build a new barn to keep the sheep in over winter so that we could retrieve the manure and cut down on chemical fertilizer (essential to keep up the fertility of thin stony soils like ours). Although one of our chief joys was the sight of the lambs playing in the pastures, we, too, ran a feedlot. The flock that lambed in April was only part of the flock. We also had sheep who lambed in February. Those lambs never did see grass. They stayed in the barn, eating the very best hay and whole grains, until they were ready for butcher.

Like every other farmer, we had problems of capitalization: we had to make maximum use of our barn space. We had to respond to demands of the market economy: in order to satisfy the chain stores who bought lamb from our farmers' co-op, we had to be able to provide top-quality (i.e. young) lamb year-round. And we had to make maximum use of our labour force: since the daily care of the animals required that we be there on the farm all winter long anyway, we might as well be lambing.

Farmers are constantly being told to be more efficient, to improve their management, to maximize utilization of resources. But as we do so, we slip by degrees into the industrial system. The economic imperatives of our food system force certain practices on farmers so that they can survive as farmers. When the costs of production become too high, and the selling price of the commodity doesn't keep pace, the choice is to cut corners or go out of business, or both. In either case, it is always announced as the farmer's own fault.

If I learned one thing in the loneliness of an isolated farm in Nova Scotia, it was that the isolation is deceptive, fostering an individualist illusion that we are independent. The fact is that we were operating, not just on the world market for lamb, but also in terms of the world red meat market. In other words, the price we could get for our lambs was determined in large part not only by the price New Zealand farmers were forced to accept for their lambs, but also by the price Panama or Costa Rica were prepared to take for the beef produced on the lands 'reclaimed' by destroying the rainforests. Indeed, we survive largely by virtue of persuading local consumers to pay a premium for fresh, local product; but the base line remains the world red meat market, controlled by the likes of Canada Packers, and the speculators on commodity futures.

If we give up, if we refuse to go on producing, year after year, for a price which rarely if ever reaches the cost of production — why then the corporations with which we deal will simply move operations abroad. Half a world away, we are effectively controlled, as producers, by the same forces that control the peasant farmers of the Third World. It is crystal clear that there is no real solution to our problems as producers that does not include them.

The same is true of consumers. Switching to tofu made from soybeans grown in Central America by a multinational corporation, on land which formerly grew sustenance crops for the peasants who now work as day-labourers for less than a living wage on that same land, using chemicals for pest and weed control which have been banned in North America as

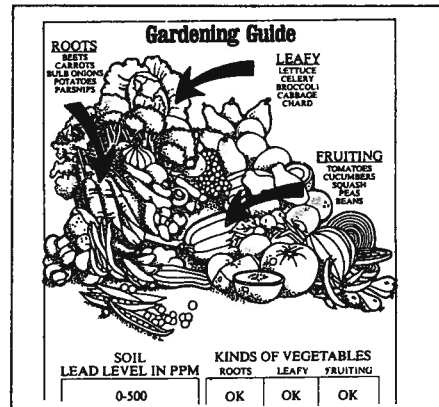
unsafe . . . what kind of a healthy alternative is that?

Nevertheless, we must start somewhere if we want to change the direction of our food system. The first step is to realize that 'we are what we eat' in a deep sense: to begin at the personal level to make conscious and responsible decisions about what we eat. We need to develop what some have called 'a taste for justice': to eat foods which are grown locally, which are minimally processed, which are produced without systematic resource to chemicals and which are co-operatively distributed. These actions, by themselves, will not alter the food system significantly: there are no individual solutions to the food system. They can, however, be the beginning of a process of empowerment.

Starting with the personal, we can move to such communal actions as working in a community garden or a food distribution co-op. We can make contacts with farm women (such as the National Farmers Union) and support them in their political actions to keep farmers on the land. We can organize the kind of global pressure that forced Nestle to back down on its promotion practices. We can lobby Parliament against legislation which increases corporate control of the food system, for example, the Plant Breeders Rights bill.

But whatever actions we undertake, the major task which confronts us is to *imagine* a different kind of food system. Rather than concentrating on what sort of food is healthy for the individual person, we must think about what kind of production system is healthy for the globe. Acting in the context of this vision of a different kind of food system, we will gain the freedom — and the power — to force change for some measure of justice in this one.

Cathleen Kneen recently 'retired' from a sheep farm in Nova Scotia and moved to Toronto, where she works with the Latin American Working Group. A long-time activist in the women's health movement, she was a founder of the Pictou County Women's Centre in Nova Scotia. She continues her activity around issues of health and food through the newly-formed Nutrition Policy Institute and is co-publisher of The Ram's Horn.



A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO LEAD

by Barbara Wallace and Kathy Cooper

Do you plan to grow your own vegetables this year? If you do, this book is a must! Find out which areas are safe for food crops, and how to get your soil tested for lead content. Protect yourself and your family from possible lead contamination, which affects a startling 50% of Canadian kids. (Published by NC PRESS) \$12.95

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Food for Profit

Learning at the Supermarket

The international food system is complex, confusing and staggering in its scope. For anyone trying to help others understand its structure and methods an immediate stumbling block is trying to make the system understandable. To get a grasp on the issues, a person has to be able to break the system down into digestible components.

Such is the task of popular education. For anyone starting to learn about the food industry there aren't many readily available educational resources. *The Ram's Horn*, the newsletter of the Nutrition Policy Institute (see box), is an excellent source of information about food policies and corporate and government actions. It's a good source of information, but it isn't a group teaching tool. To find that, we need to back up a few years, when during the late 1970s a number of progressive organizations all focused attention on the politics of food. Ten Days for World Development, an inter-church public awareness project which takes place each February began to focus on food and hunger. Development agencies were working with people in developing countries who were experiencing social upheaval, poverty and malnourishment in part because of changes in the production and distribution of food. In the face of the government's expensive Food Prices Review Board, the People's Food Commission was born. Modelled on a royal commission, the People's Food Commission held hearings from coast to coast. Without a cent of government support, the Commission acted as a political and educa-

tional catalyst for the public to speak out against trends in the food system.

Some of the individuals active in both Ten Days for World Development and the People's Food Commission activities in Kitchener/Waterloo had already been involved in educational projects designed to demystify huge corporations. The idea of using the supermarket to understand the global food system was born by educator/researchers David Robertson and Stephen Allen at the Ontario Public Interest Research Group. The supermarket is most Canadians' primary point of contact with food distribution. It could be a site for learning as well as shopping.

Once the model was roughly worked out the OPIRG staff went to a fledgling development action group at the Cambridge, Ontario YWCA to find out if it would really work in practice. Deb Woods, then the chair of YW's subcommittee, enthusiastically remembers the impact of the first tour. "It was an amazing eye opener. We were a new group of middle class women. The problem was how to introduce ourselves to these global, far-reaching and yet also personal and wrenching issues," she recalls. "The familiarity of the supermarket tour made it work. It linked big issues with little frustrations we all experienced shopping."

Those first experimental tours sparked such interest, that by the time the People's Food Commission arrived in town, the YW's development committee performed a skit acting out the experience of a supermarket tour. In the skit, the perennial country-wise Granny hobbled through the super-

market simultaneously displaying confusion and outrage. "The supermarket tour makes sense of the supermarket," explains Woods, "All the weird things we've always wondered about — like why the music is fast sometimes and slow at others — there are reasons for all these things."

More tours were organized and additional research was undertaken. The model is based on the simple premise that the supermarket can graphically demonstrate how the food system works. By posing questions and starting discussion for a group of people as they walk through their own local supermarket, the tour process hopes to prompt enough thinking that each time someone buys a new food, they'll ask questions. The specific answers admittedly are few and far between . . . but the questioning itself starts a process.

SUPERMARKET



Pat Foote-Jones

Although printed in 1978, *The Supermarket Tour: A Handbook for Education and Action* is still pertinent in 1987. What follows here is information taken from the handbook. The examples cited here focus on lack of competition, consumer manipulation and corporate control. The actual statistics and specific situations cited date from the 1970s, but the situation described has not changed substantially.

STORE LAYOUT is designed to guide you past the greatest number of items. Thus, staples such as dairy products are most often at the far end of the store from the front entrance — you have to walk past displays of specials and non-necessities to get there.

Have you ever noticed that fruits and vegetables are often at the front of the store? Consumer studies have shown that consumers prefer produce in the last aisle, so that fresh fruits aren't crushed in the cart. Produce sales, however, are higher when

they're the first thing shoppers see. One food executive stated, "produce is an impulse department, it starts the buying habit."

Other impulse items are also likely to be at the store entrance. Many of these items are nongrocery items with higher mark-ups. Houseplants, for instance, are generally marked up 35 to 40 per cent, compared to 17 per cent on foods. Between 50 and 70 per cent of purchases at supermarkets are made spontaneously. Retailers attempt to set the mood for impulse buying as quickly as possible.

Stores also put high profit and brand name products where you're most likely to see them. End-of-aisle display spaces are often rented at costly rates to companies by the week or month. Next time you're in the supermarket, look and see what products are at eye-level. Market research indicates that sales increase when a product is moved from the floor to an eye-level position even by so much as 78 per cent. Thus, nationally advertised leaders and high-profit items are most often at eye level.

PRODUCT CHOICE AND COMPETITION are concepts we are taught at a young age as being central to democratic business. But competition, in the world of international finance, is often not what it appears. Let's look at two examples in the supermarket: the soup shelves and the cereal aisle.

Among the many soups on display, you'll find only a few brand labels. Lipton controls approximately 70 per cent of the dried soup market; Campbell controls the same proportion of the canned soup. Both of these corporations are part of the multiproduct conglomerates, that is, each corporation owns many companies dealing in many products. Lipton, for instance, is owned by Unilever, the world's largest agribusiness company, which controls about 800 companies around the world. Their products include several soaps (*Sunlight, Wisk, Lux, Dove, Lifebuoy*), and toothpastes (*Pepsodent, Close-up*), flours and bakery products (under the Monarch brand name) and also Shopsy's and A & W.

At first look, the cereal aisle appears more competitive. Not so: if you stopped to figure out which company made which brands you'd find that four companies account for nearly every box. General Foods, Quaker



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RENEE ALBRECHT

Nutrition Policy Institute

The Nutrition Policy Institute is a loose network of nutritionists, farmers, researchers and organizers. Its underlying philosophy is that "adequate nutrition for all people is essential to human community, justice and peace; and that the proper use of agriculture is the satisfaction of basic human need and faithful stewardship of land and water." The Institute's approach is both ecumenical and secular.

The Institute, legally incorporated in 1985, builds upon interest which had been created by the bi-monthly newsletter *The Rams Horn* (published since 1980 by Brewster and Cathleen Kneen). Documents from the Institute are the most likely source for finding up-to-date information of the sort used in documenting *The Supermarket Tour*.

Memberships in the Nutrition Policy Institute are \$25.00 per year. Members receive both *The Rams Horn* and during alternate months, *Rams Horn Documents*. Subscriptions to just *The Rams Horn* are available for \$6.00 per year. Contact Brewster Kneen, Nutrition Policy Institute, 14 Blong Ave., Toronto, Ont. M4M 1P2 (416) 469-8414.

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Oats, Kellogg's and General Mills control approximately 90 per cent of the cereal market. By producing numerous, slightly different products the Big Four guarantee that competitors don't even get onto the shelves. Remember when granola first became popular? First you had to make it or buy it from a health food store. Then small independent companies supplied the supermarkets. Quickly Quaker manufactured *100% Natural Cereal*, Kellogg's produced *Country Morning* and General Mills created *Nature Valley Granola*. Now it's difficult to find other granolas at the supermarket.

NUTRITION AND PRICES both suffer because of the lack of competition. Inside a box of *Wheaties*, 'the cereal of champions,' there are no more than a few cents worth of wheat. The box costs more than the wheat does. *Total* is essentially *Wheaties* coated with a half penny's worth of vitamins, that costs approximately a quarter more. *King Vitamin* is sprayed with enough vitamins that it could qualify as a vitamin pill!! Even so, *King Vitamin* is 50 per cent sugar by weight. A Health & Welfare survey of the sugar content of cereals aimed at children: *Apple Jacks*, *Sugar Pops*, *Boo Berry*, *Count Chocula* were up to 54 per cent sugar by weight. A Sara Lee chocolate cake is 36 per cent sugar by weight!

ADVERTISING doesn't indicate the food value of these cereals or of numerous other foods. In the case of sugar-laden cereals, manufacturers declined the government's suggestion that they voluntarily indicate sugar amounts on packaging.

When a manufacturing sector is dominated by just a few corporations, companies no longer compete with one another on the basis of price or quality. Instead they compete in less volatile areas: advertising, cost reductions [not price reductions], automation, etc. Advertising expenditures are high — Unilever spent approximately \$5 billion worldwide annually in the mid-1970s. According to a major food industry trade text, "The supermarket shopper is perhaps the most studied individual alive" and most of the research is geared to understanding what will motivate sales. *Canadian Grocer* magazine commented that "For large scale advertising to work the buyer must be only partially informed about the nature of the prod-

uct and the product must be complex enough so that precise evaluation is not possible." Translated, this means that effective advertising "disinforms."

One common sales technique is to sell at prices ending in nine. We tend to translate 29¢ to 20¢, and studies show that we're more likely to buy a product for \$9.99 than for \$10. Another common gimmick is multiple unit pricing. Do you buy more than you need when you're offered two for the price of one? If so, how often do you calculate to be sure you're actually saving money per unit? Multiple unit pricing increases sales even when there is no saving to be had! Sales increase as the multiple increases, say from '2 for' to '6 for.' A decade ago *Progressive Grocer* suggested, some "women even think that's the only way the store will sell them."

UNECESSARY PRODUCTS couldn't exist without extensive advertising. *Pringles* potato chips are a prime example of a product which offered minimal or no benefits over products already produced at the time it was put on the market. *Pringles'* manufacturer, Proctor and Gamble, explains "the development of *Pringles* is a classic case of recognizing a need in a consumer market and then painstakingly working a way to meet it." Supposedly, breakage and bulky packaging of bagged potato chips were the bane of the shopping woman's existence. What *Pringles* really did was make possible for the first time, national distribution and advertising of potato chips: stacked and sealed in solid containers, the chips can be shipped across the country, they can sit on a shelf for a year without going stale, and they're priced approximately 50 per cent higher than bagged potato chips. One of the developers of pudding cups, another dubious product, said it all: "What do they have to offer? Among other things, above-average profit margins and little or no dependence on agricultural commodity prices." CONTROL can be increased by using more artificial and less agricultural components. It also results when a company gains control over several stages and processes of production. This is what is called vertical integration. These stories are hidden behind the products in the supermarket. Let's look at just two examples: bread and

frozen french fries.

At the bread shelves there *appear* to be numerous different brands of bread. The appearance is deceiving. For instance, at Loblaws, owned by George Weston Ltd., 80 to 90 per cent of the breads are baked by Weston companies. Weston doesn't control just the bakeries. It owns the dairies from which the milk comes; it owns the sugar importer; and it owns the distribution companies. Although Weston is less likely to own the supermarket in western and eastern Canada than in central Canada, it has a similar level of integration because it owns large wholesale operations which supply many of the supermarket chains such as Super Valu, Red & White and Lucky Dollar.

Looking at potatoes illuminates even more the extent of corporate control in setting prices and product standards. McCain is the classic example. In addition to being Canada's largest processor of frozen french fries, McCain produces meat and dairy products, vegetables, frozen Italian foods, cakes and desserts. Expanding rapidly in the Maritimes, McCain now controls the entire New Brunswick potato industry. If potato farmers in New Brunswick are to sell their crop, they have no choice but to sell to McCain. Most often, an advance contract is entered into for the crop, and more often than not the sale price is less than the cost to produce the product. Banks often require a contract as backing for a loan, and if the bank won't lend, McCain will lend at high interest rates. McCain not only buys the potatoes from farmers it sells the farmers' the input requirements: McCain owns the



Pat Foote-Jones



major farm machinery company, fertilizer manufacturer, seed distributor and retail outlets for pesticides, fungicides and herbicides. As well, McCain has gained an even greater control of prices by buying out farmers who go bankrupt. The message is clear: "If you won't deliver at our price, you won't deliver at all."

And it isn't just the prices which suffer. If you're growing potatoes to become frozen french fries specific qualities are desirable. Unfortunately, the potatoes that have the most sellable texture and durability for frozen french fries have less nutritional value than the potatoes we used to eat when potatoes weren't grown for freezing. Because mass production requires uniformity, the lower nutrition potato is now the norm for any farmer even hoping to sell a full crop. And we aren't even talking about taste and aesthetics!

STORE BRANDS also increase profits. Loblaw's is the miracle of grocery chain marketing. In winning its Ontario-based war for dominance with Dominion, Loblaw's pushed store brands and 'No Frills' stores. Once Loblaw's had an established market for its No Name products, it created a new up-scale line of house products called President's Choice. To confuse shoppers, products sold under the two store labels are rarely in comparable-sized containers. In some cases, such as mineral water, the President's Choice brand appears cheaper because smaller packaging downplays the higher per unit cost. Loblaw's has managed to do what no other chain had managed to do before: it created entirely new mass markets for previously marginal products (e.g. specialty vine-

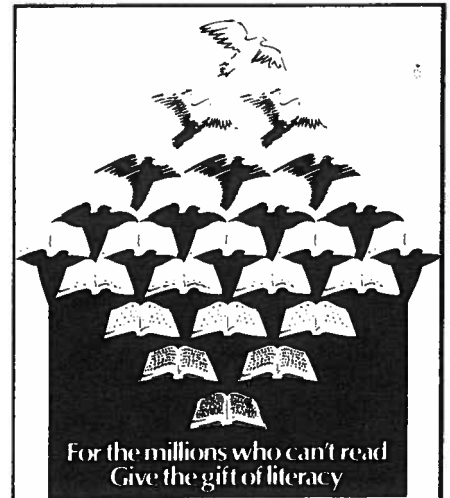
gars, imported biscuits, housewares) through extensive distribution of a catchy newsletter combining folksiness and hard sell. According to an October, 1986 article in *The Globe & Mail*, Loblaw's long-range plans are to increase the number of house products and the percentage of shelf space devoted to house products, until it is able to sell only a few major brand names deemed irreplaceable alongside its own products.

Typically store brands are cheaper for the consumer when first introduced than nationally advertised competitors, but return much higher profits to the retailer. Over time, the difference in price narrows. Analysts predict that predominance of store brands will lead to less consumer choice, increased food costs, and increased unemployment resulting from centralization of production and economic power to a few companies. MORE COULD BE LEARNED at the supermarket, but these are enough ideas and tidbits of information perhaps to start questioning how the food system affects each and every one of us.

Think about creating your own supermarket tour with a few friends. It might be, in Deb Woods' words, "an amazing eye opener." Keeping your eyes and ears open at the supermarket, a place you probably hardly notice as you make your way from the canned tomatoes to frozen orange juice, is always insightful. Doing so in a group can increase the understanding gained. "It was an ideal tool for gently politicizing us," remembers Woods.

Connie Clement is a member of Women Healthsharing.

Thanks is given to the Ontario Public Interest Research Group for permission to adapt material from The Supermarket Tour: A Handbook for Education and Action. The handbook is out-of-print in English; copies in French are available at a cost of \$3.00 from OPIRG. Also available to rent is a slide-tape show produced in 1983. The English language show is 30 minutes long (140 slides). Rental is \$10 plus shipping. Contact OPIRG at 229 College St., Suite 203, Toronto, Ont. M5T 1R4.



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The following herbs are available by the ounce or the 100 grams in most health food stores, or you can grow your own in your garden. Combine one cup of any combination of the following seven herbs in a cheese cloth bundle placed under the faucet while running your bath water to create a wonderful herbal bath.

COMFREY (*Symphytum officinale*) regenerates aging tissue, stimulates growth of healthy tissue, draws out infection.

MALLOW (*Malva sappa*) contains a sweet mucilage which has unique healing and soothing properties; good for roughness, scabs, and to stop falling hair when massaged into scalp.

MARIGOLD (*Calendula officinalis*) beneficial to complexion, especially for sensitive skin or eyes.

MARJORAM (*Origanum vulgare*) mild external antiseptic, expels poisons, aids nerves, stimulates sense of touch.

PANSY (*Viola tricolor*) cooling and soothing; tannic and salicylic acid makes it effective as a medical astringent and a specific for the skin.

THYME (*Thymus vulgaris*) its properties are: antiseptic, deodorant, stimulant, aromatic; good for inflammations.

YARROW (*Archillae millefolium*) famous for healing wounds; dilates skin pores; works as a blood purifier, nerve tonic and eliminates unhealthy skin conditions.

Oil Baths

Never use baby oils containing coconut or petroleum based oils as these products will clog your skin. Natural, pure hydrogenated oils such as sesame, peanut or virgin olive oil will soak into your pores without clogging them. A few drops of the aromatic oil you prefer, for example lavender, will provide your bath water with a delicious aroma. It is suggested that you use essential oils which are the distilled extract of the oil of a single plant without any additives.

The healing power of plants has been known since the days of the Neanderthals. In recent years a renewal of interest in the power of herbs has been a part of a return to a healthier lifestyle, a reaction to costly and synthetic foods and medicines riddled with side effects.

"Healing has traditionally been the prerogative of motherhood; it combined wisdom and nurturance, tenderness and skill," say Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English in *For Her Own Good*, "... women were expected to be at least literate in the language of herbs and healing techniques."

Knowledge about the medicinal uses of plants was handed down from mothers to their daughters and included information on how to grow and collect herbs, how to use fresh and dried herbs, how to distill or seep them in oils, and how to turn them into salves and ointments.

When women were exploring plants as treatment for a variety of ailments, they also discovered their aromatic and cosmetic uses. Seventeenth century English women often had a distilling room, or still-room, where concoctions of perfumes and pomanders were prepared to help freshen the less than appetizing scent of life without running water and adequate sewage.

Three-Herb Hair Rinse

Combine two ounces of each of the following herbs in your rinse water.

HORSETAIL (*Equisetum arvense*) a powerful antiseptic, strengthens hair, nails and tooth enamel, eliminates dandruff; contains calcium, silicone, sulphured fluorine.

LAVENDER (*Lavendula vera*) first rate hair conditioner, stimulates hair growth; combined with rosemary raises the spirit.

ROSEMARY (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) great for hair as it glosses, strengthens and brightens; used to purify and protect from harmful energies.

Christine E. Devai

Herbs

Skin — the largest organ of the body — is constantly renewing itself by shedding its outer layers of dead cells exposing the healthy young cells beneath. Physiologists estimate that a complete new covering of skin occurs every two to three weeks.

The normal condition of skin is slightly acidic, moist and soft. The skin's essential functions include absorption, protection from injury and bacterial invasion, and regulation of body temperature. It is important to avoid clogging skin pores as this inhibits the skin's effectiveness.

Use skin and hair products wisely. Read labels. Unfortunately, manufacturers of Canadian cosmetics, unlike their U.S. counterparts, are not required to list constituent ingredients. If you suspect your skin is sensitive, do a patch test on your arm and leave it for a day or two to check for any negative reactions. You might also consider buying a small amount of any new products, reducing waste should you discover that the product disagrees with you.

Alternatives to expensive commercial preparations exist in the form of herbs, vegetable oils, and the like which are easy to prepare using ingredients from your local grocer or natural foods store. Listed on this page are but a few suggestions.

Facials for Oily Skin

Tomato Pack

This will dry excessive oil and refine the skin. Slice one large non-juicy tomato into thick slices and let the juice and seeds drain off. Mash the tomato with a wooden spoon and add one teaspoon of brewer's yeast. Apply on to the face and cover with a hot, damp washcloth for ten to twenty minutes while you relax in the bathtub.

Buttermilk Mask

Apply plain buttermilk to the face. Leave on for ten minutes; wash off with warm water.

Facials for Dry and Normal Skin

Yogurt Mask

This will moisten and regenerate the texture of your skin. Add a dash of lemon juice to some plain yogurt. Fresh yogurt is usually of a thicker consistency and consequently will be easier to apply to your face. Leave on the face for ten to 20 minutes and rinse off with either lukewarm water or rose vinegar (see recipe on this page).

Egg Yolk Mask

Mix together one beaten egg yolk, 1/2 teaspoon of olive oil and 1/2 teaspoon of lime juice. When smooth, apply to the skin. Leave on the face for 15 minutes and then wash off with water.

Rose Vinegar Astringent

Put one ounce of rose petals and one handful of chamomille flowers in two cups of vinegar (either apple cider or wine vinegar). Let steep for one week. Strain and add one cup of rosewater to the strained liquid. This is an effective astringent wash for the face. To use, simply dip cotton or a soft cloth into the rosewater vinegar and sponge face.

Oatmeal Facial Scrub

This facial scrub is a wholesome change from soap; it is soothing, yet it provides a thorough and deep cleansing for the skin. Mix together: 3/4 cup of oatmeal, 2 Tbsp. of cornmeal, and 4 cups of bran. Blend all ingredients in a blender until of uniform consistency. Store in a jar with a tight lid; will keep indefinitely.

To use: Wet the face with warm water. Mix one tablespoon of facial scrub with water until it feels pasty. Rub into the face in circular motions, avoiding the eyes and paying special attention to the oilier areas. Rinse off with cool water.

Alice Grange is a member of Women Health-sharing.

Christine Devai is an herbalist in private practice. From her base in Jackson Point, Ontario she provides training in botanical health care.

Joan Riggs

Cultivating Community:

Co-operative

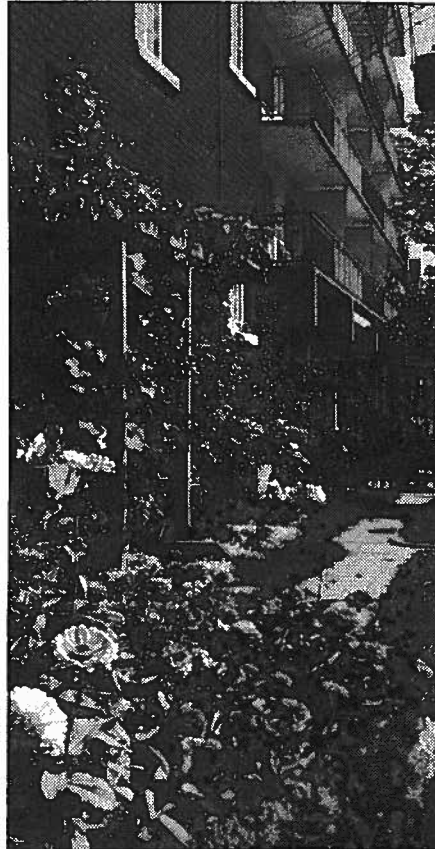
"Women's lives are profoundly affected by the design and the use of public spaces and buildings . . . The built environment is a cultural artifact. It is shaped by human intention and intervention, a living archaeology through which we can extract the priorities and beliefs of the decision-makers in our society. Both the process through which we build and the forms themselves embody cultural values and imply standards of behaviour which affect us all.

*Women's Environmental Rights: A Manifesto
Heresies, 1981*

Today, there is an increasing commitment to using urban space for green and productive means. The growing trend, loosely termed community gardening, has taken many shapes in urban settings; from city-run garden plots, to urban farms, from multilevel gardens in co-operative housing to collective greenhouses.

They are all designed to yield produce for the community of people working on the garden, be they family, neighbourhood, or group of friends. What often makes community gardening an exception to the home-grown backyard gardener is the political rationale behind it. All the women in the examples that follow are committed both to producing healthy food and to sustaining a holistic and healthy way of life.

Economics, health, food, and a general sense of controlling our lives and environment are the reasons often cited for working in community gardens. Plus, it is an opportunity to work



Connie Guberman

"The abundant yields of community gardens are a reflection of our own healing work."

with other people to create an edible product and to assist in developing and shaping a more human urban landscape.

Gardening

Eco-Feminism

"Eco-feminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practise. It asserts the special strength and integrity of every living thing," writes Leonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland in *Reclaim the Earth*. Eco-feminists see community gardening as a tool to nurture the earth and to challenge the way the patriarchal institutions abuse it. As they reclaim their lives and spaces, they are speaking and acting against a male system that rapes the earth of its non-renewable resources (including air, water and fuel) and that uses up arable land to develop nuclear technology and create pollution.

Eco-feminists' basic philosophy and approach to gardening relates to other aspects of our lives. The development of alternative, positive forms of living can be the complimentary half to the tiring political work we do to protest the abuse and objectification of every living thing. Peace means not only an end to war but also a reshaping of social values. Community gardens exemplify the restorative process of doing and creating. Their abundant yields are a reflection of our healing work.

Eco-feminists try to take as much responsibility for their space, diet and exercise as possible. But it takes time to find a plot and to harvest a crop. It takes time to tend a garden and it takes basic information that is not always easily available. Women generally lack these resources and therefore eco-feminists emphasize the necessity of relying upon one another in developing a self-healing way of life.

Regent Park Nutrition Project: Women Enabling Women

The summer of 1986 was the third year that Regent Park Sole Support Mothers produced a community garden filled with cabbages, leeks, lettuce, tomatoes, green peppers . . . and the list goes on. All the women are single mothers on Family Benefit allowance and living in the public housing community of Regent Park in Toronto.

The purpose of the garden is many-fold: for mothers to gather around the issue of inadequate access to nutritional food; for them to gain a sense of self-sufficiency; to enable mothers to buy nutritious food at lower prices; to allow them to get out of the city for day trips; to experience different social gatherings; and to belong to and control their environment.

Getting a piece of land was difficult, but after much convincing (convincing that the land would be used and cared for), the Metro Toronto Housing Authority allocated a piece of land in the middle of the public housing development for the garden. The first year was spent turning the grassland into productive soil. Donations of manure, compost and rich soil from rural farms were a great help to the women. After an initial run with a rotatiller, everything else was done by hand.

All the fresh vegetables produced were given away to the women who had worked on the project, or to other members of the public housing project through a small food bank run by the mothers. The garden project didn't stop there. They organized "pick your own" field trips to local farms. Some of the food produced was transformed into "multicultural dinners" where an ethnic group planned and prepared a meal with everyone assisting and enjoying. Everyone benefited as women learned to make nutritional dishes, as they socialized and worked with a different cultural group.

The Nanatuk Urban Farm: An Oasis in the City

Randi Cherry sees her Ottawa urban farm as an extension of her concerns with the survival of a natural environment. She outlines three objectives for her urban farm: to become as self-sufficient in as many vegetables as

possible, to create a place that is so luscious and inviting that other people will be stimulated to do the same, and to educate others to grow and use nutritious food. Her farm is open to the public for people to visit and learn.

For Randi Cherry having an urban farm isn't just a hobby. It is a way of life that incorporates values related to the holistic, energy efficient and natural health care movement. Randi sows heritage seeds, does not use pesticides or fungicides, and so is able to provide food to friends who have auto-immune, or 20th century disease and are allergic to many chemicals.

An Urban Development Perspective

The distribution of community land has always been a major concern for citizens. Traditionally it has been those in high income residential areas who have managed to convince city councils to preserve green space, while many low income city dwellers have had to contend with by-laws that have made it against the law for even small garden tubs to be on their balconies.

How can urban dwellers learn more about gardening? Monique Pasquali, former co-ordinator of community plots with Algonquin College suggests as a start to notice other gardens and to visit health food and co-op food centres. She suggests that a federal government department like Agriculture Canada should consider providing community resource people who could help develop skills and alternative food sources.

Unfortunately, many people consider vegetables unsightly. When working with senior citizens on a balcony garden plot, Monique Pasquali couldn't convince them to plant vegetables because they found them so unattractive. Many of these women were on limited incomes and were not eating well by the end of the month, but they insisted on planting only pretty flowers. It wasn't until Monique introduced the brilliant scarlet runner beans, that they were ready to transform their balcony into a lush, gorgeous and productive area.


As Pasquali points out, "People often ask if it is worthwhile to grow vegetables in the city because of the pollution . . . in the supermarket you contend with products that don't just have air and acid rain pollution but also pesti-

cides and fungicides. When you have your own garden, at least you can control for the latter two."

The whole concept of urban development has to be rethought. Today priority is given to maximizing the monetary value of the land. We must also recognize the contribution to the community of visible and productive gardens for food. Gardens give one a sense of life, a real perspective on growth. They enable people to learn patience and to delight in each stage of the development of a growing organism. Gardening is a high contrast to everyday, hectic, stressful urban existence.

City Garden Plots: A Community Mandate?

Most major municipalities have garden plots which they rent by the year to citizens. In Ottawa there are 35 acres available to citizens for plots. There



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I am interested in contacting persons who have either experienced female circumcision or health personnel who have administered obstetrical or gynaecological care to those who have. I am a registered nurse with several years experience in international health. Confidentiality assured.

Please contact: Mildred Jarvis, Health Science Division, Seneca College, 1255 Sheppard Ave., North York, Ont. (416) 491-5050, Ext. 4015.

Bendictin Damage?

I am interested in getting in contact with other women who took the drug Bendictin [known in Canada as Diclectin] during their pregnancy. This drug has been withdrawn from the market and is the subject of many lawsuits in the United States.

If you feel your child has been damaged by Bendictin, please get in touch with me so that we can discuss a mutual course of action: Catharine Sutherland, R.R. 1, Ameliasburg, Ont. K0K 1A0.

Infertility Experience

Critical feminist writings wanted for an international anthology on *The Exploitation of Pain: Infertility and the New Reproductive Technologies*. To include coping with infertility, experiences with treatments and interventions and alternative strategies (e.g. research). Will include essays, stories, diary entries of 20 pages maximum. Confidentiality assured.

Send submissions and queries ASAP to Renade Klein, School of Humanities, Deakin University, Victoria 3217, Australia.

are two sizes of plots, 25 by 50 feet, and the perennial plot 50 by 100 feet. Both are available for \$30 a year. A financial assistance policy provides some subsidized plots. The City provides water, ploughing and discing and a staff person during the day all summer. For an additional \$5 a season you can rent a locker to keep your tools.

Ottawa citizens have experienced this form of community gardening for many years, due to the foresight of the National Capital Commission. The NCC also had some political commitment and a basic understanding of the value of garden plots. During wartime they made garden plots available to Ottawa citizens. In the 1960s the NCC strategically placed plots in communities where there was a need for inexpensive, additional food. Over the years that mandate has been lost and the only area set aside for community gardening in the city of Ottawa is in a middle income, high residential area. The area has the capacity to expand should more plots be requested but, instead the demand is on the decrease.

The largest users of city garden plots are senior citizens and young families. When city employees have tried to promote the plots they have met with a very limited response. When asked if they actively sought low-income peoples' participation in the projects the reply was "no." They also responded negatively to the idea of several smaller plots being spread throughout the city because of the expense.

Community garden plots simply don't work if you have to leave your home neighbourhood to work in your garden. The cost of transportation and the inconvenience of transporting tools and supplies is a deterrent. But the primary loss is the lack of the informal social network which is gained through gardening. A network cannot be sustained when gardeners live such long distances from each other and their garden. There is also another drawback — city gardeners often have no control over the land they are being allocated and they quickly lose interest because they cannot develop the land over the years.

It appears that the original intentions of cities like Ottawa were admirable but the political mandate has been lost. Community gardens are not only gardens but should be tools for solidifying communities.

Take the Challenge: Create Your Own Community Garden

People have a range of practical, philosophical or political reasons for using community gardens. All the gardeners I spoke with wanted to produce their own food, and most were concerned about avoiding the poisons in store-bought food. Many of the senior citizens do it as a hobby, to meet people and to save a little money. For the Regent Park women it is a political tool to take collective control over their environment, and for eco-feminists it is an environmental issue. For all the groups there is a basic underlying commitment to create positive alternatives.

Consider starting a community garden in your backyard, neighbourhood or city. If you have land available, share it. If you don't have land, pressure your neighbourhood association, co-op or city to make land available for a productive community and collective garden.

Call a group of women together who are willing to put in a little time planning, seeding and weeding. The next steps are easy. Pore over your seed catalogues, and start digging as soon as the final winter ground frost is gone. Good gardening!

Joan Riggs is an Ottawa activist and writer. She is a member of the Breaking the Silence collective.

Further Reading

The Growing City is a step-by-step guide to establishing urban community gardens. Although written using Toronto as an example, it has useful information for any community about finding a site, organizing people and planning.

The Growing City is available from the Ontario Public Interest Research Group for \$10 plus \$1.50 handling. To order write OPIRG — Toronto, Room 301, 2 Sussex Ave., Innis College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ont. M5S 1J5.

MY STORY, OUR STORY

Benefitting from Homeopathy

Cy-Thea Sand

In the Spring of 1980 I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. Now I am neither. I sought out and stuck to a form of alternative medicine, homeopathy, which challenges the basic assumptions of contemporary medicine.

I am fortunate enough now to enjoy health and I share my experience especially with those who most need it.

I am 18 years old and severely depressed. I sit and stare into space until a family member startles me back into the living room. One of my aunts buys me a suede coat "to make me feel better." I cry myself to sleep wishing that her loving gesture, made with a working woman's hard-earned pay, could scatter the fog which has me boxed into this self-absorbed, lonely place. I'm in second year university on a scholarship program, and seconds before a public speaking engagement I swallow a bottle of tranquilizers. A psychiatrist tells my parents that I should be hospitalized but I refuse. I worry that psychotropic drugs and electroshock treatment will destroy my will, determined as I am to finish my courses. Mild tranquilizers stabilize me. Days pass in a hazy stillness and I am concerned about having to be on pills for the rest of my life.

Over the next several years I suffered occasional but manageable attacks of depression and anxiety until a nervous collapse just after my 30th birthday. I spent that summer in a treatment program, withdrawing from valium and painkillers. I got better on a certain level, but my energy remained low and I was still susceptible to anxiety and depression.

In the winter of 1980 I felt myself going under again and I was terrified. I was desperate enough to consult a psychiatrist. What was wrong with me? Why was I so tired and frightened,

despite a loving relationship, many friends, and the excitement of having my writing published? Constant headaches were driving me into despair. A tendency towards hesitant, laboured speech haunted my life since childhood and was worsening; I could barely speak to the psychiatrist in front of me. She prescribed Haldol (a trade name for the tranquilizer haloperidol), and a psychiatric day program. In desperation and against my better judgement I accepted her first suggestion, but I was deeply humiliated by the second and refused. I wanted to take control over my life, not be shuffled off to strangers like a recalcitrant child. I tried vitamins, visualization therapy and exercise. But nothing seemed to address what I suspected were deep constitutional tendencies and inherited predispositions: my family's medical history is checkered with nervousness, depression and alcoholism.

Because I was gaining weight as quickly as I was losing my sense of worth, I joined a group of feminists and lesbians who were exploring food and fat issues from a radical perspective. Analyzing the concrete reality of fat helped me to understand the less tangible anxiety which was making my life increasingly unbearable. I was into my fourth or fifth session with the group when I broke down and lamented my overall sense of failure. I worried that another nervous breakdown was threatening, hovering over my consciousness like a nightmarish vision.

A rush of reassurance flowed from the women like tea and sympathy in a crisis. The chorus of comfort and suggestions was highlighted by one group member mentioning that her hyperactive son was being helped tremendously by Louis Klein, a Vancouver homeopath. She was so impressed with her child's improvement that she

was now seeing him about her own chronic depression and fatigue. She noticed a marked increase in her energy level and she encouraged me to give Louis Klein a call.

Swallowing Haldol was not helping. In fact, my anxiety attacks were getting worse. The following morning, after coffee eased the grogginess of a drug-disturbed sleep, I called for an appointment. My long arduous journey into health began.

Learning

When I walked into Louis Klein's office that spring morning in 1980 I knew very little about the homeopathic healing process. I learned that the curative process for chronic disease begins with an in depth interview during which symptoms and medical history are detailed. Based on this and the homeopath's own observations, she or he chooses one of thousands of homeopathic remedies.

The potency of the remedies, whose sources are herbal, animal or mineral, is affected by a dilution process perfected by the father of homeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann. Each remedy affects the healthy individual in a different way. A substance has the same ability to induce a symptom as it does to remove it. In other words, if the remedies Louis gave to me were given to a healthy person, she would have developed my symptoms. But given to me they stimulated my body's immune system.

At one point in my treatment I suffered from intense physical agitation, burning headaches, and a horrible frantic feeling. As these symptoms grew steadily worse, Louis prescribed the tarantula remedy which originates from the spider's venom. I was evoking the symptoms of someone who had been bitten by the spider. Transformed into a homeopathic remedy, tarantula eliminated the symptoms in me. This is a fundamental concept of homeopathy — like heals like — and is referred to as Hahnemann's law of similars.

Hahnemann differentiated the orthodox medicine of his day — allopathy from the Greek words *allos* (different) and *pathein* (disease, suffering) — from his system which he called homeopathy from the Greek *homoion* (similar) and *pathein*. Modern medicine is based on the principle that a disease is cured by using a medicine to suppress the symptom. The prescribed drugs

that I had taken on and off for many years had suppressed my anxiety, and painkillers had given me temporary relief from chronic headaches. In homeopathic terms, by suppressing my symptoms like this, my system had been severely taxed. The underlying disorder was driven deeper and deeper, draining my overall vitality and well-being.

From the homeopathic perspective, when the individual's vital force is out of harmony or balance, disease symptoms erupt. This vital force can be understood as the body's defense mechanism or natural power of recovery. Remedies treat the symptoms to strengthen one's overall constitution and to energize the body's self-healing properties.

Having experienced for the past seven years the sometimes gradual, sometimes dramatic changes in my health, I understand the vital force to be a type of energy economy which disease disrupts. Remedies stimulate the body's immune system to cure the underlying disease and the result, in my experience, is the disappearance of the symptoms and an increased level of energy and resilience.

Healing

In the process of stimulating the body's immune system, remedies can cause the symptoms to become temporarily worse. This is called an aggravation and the one I suffered after my first remedy was atypical in intensity and duration. At one point I wanted Louis to hospitalize me, but he countered that I wasn't sick, I was fighting to get well. I seemed to relive *every* trauma, *every* nightmare, *every* ache, pain and stress of my 33 years.

One afternoon I experienced a tremendous stomach pain reminiscent of the one I had at 16 when I suffered an acute intestinal infection. At other times I felt like a three-year-old, frightened and anxious, my adult self having drifted away leaving me terrified, absolutely terrified to be alone.

The anxiety was racking my body so badly. It was as if my body's memory had been poked and prodded. Every cell seemed to be purging itself of toxins. My hair was amazingly greasy for about 10 days and my legs ached so badly that I could barely walk. My mind was a jumble of negative thoughts and sensations, and I felt trapped in a body that had its wires

crossed.

Louis explained the severity of my illness in terms of my inherited predispositions, my intense nature, the cumulative effect of drug taking, and the potency of the Haldol I took just before starting homeopathic treatment. He compared the homeopathic healing process metaphorically to peeling layer after layer from an onion.

The remedies gradually work through the layers until an optimum level of health is achieved. This is a dynamic process involving the patient taking responsibility for her health and taking care to note changes in her symptoms. The duration of this process varies as widely as the individuals involved in homeopathic healing and the more seriously ill one is, the longer the healing time. Mental and emotional symptoms also take longer than physical ones to heal.

Why did I stick to this form of treatment when many people would not? I wanted to be well and I noticed that my energy level kept improving week by week. Over the next several months I suffered relapses but the symptoms were not as intense and did not last long. I would be given another remedy at this point and be symptom free with a higher level of energy for another period of time. The changes I experienced were fascinating and intense. Confusing at times, definitely. But to feel oneself healing deep inside is an intoxicating experience.

At some point over the past seven years a dramatic, fundamental shift took place within me. Not at a particular moment or after a specific remedy, but gradually. I became more flexible, more resilient and the severity and frequency of my health problems lessened remarkably or disappeared altogether. For example, the headaches and migraines I suffered for at least 10 years were so severe that I never left home without a few painkillers in my pocket. Now I find remnants of this old habit when I reach into the pockets of the pants I can wear again. I very seldom get a headache these days and if I do the pain is slight and disappears quickly. I do not even think about pain killers anymore which is truly amazing for this former pill-popper!

Less deep-seated problems like sinus congestion vanished without any work on my part, but I did have to give up

Vicks Vapour Rub which had helped me to breathe for years! (Vicks contains camphor which is known to negate homeopathic remedies.)

My temper eased out gradually and I noticed that I was less often in a rage or out of control with anger. My shyness became less inhibiting, and I felt much less judgmental of others. I am now actually easy going at times.

I have been depressed for much of my life and now I am not.

However the process of cure has demanded patience — something I have little of — and a profound change in my understanding of time. At one point I wanted to erase my years of suffering and begin my life, figuratively, from a healthy new beginning. Louis Klein cautioned that I would have to integrate my experience of disease, but I dismissed this notion. I finally realized that being sick was one aspect of my life that I must put into a long term perspective. I am now able to live fully in the present because I am no longer terrified of the future: my symptoms are lessening year by year as I get stronger and stronger and lose less time to the pain and drain of suffering.

Homeopathy is about the improvement of health in a total and long term way. Symptoms of profound nervous tension still bother me from time to time but they are less limiting and exhausting and I know that in time I will be even freer than I am today from their effects. I still enjoy the excitement of realizing how long it has been since melancholy haunted my days. Now I crave fresh air and exercise. The psychic knots of confusion and despair have unravelled into an everyday life of ups and downs. Last spring I planted flowers for the first time.

Further Reading

Homeopathy: Questions and Answers, Karl Robinson.

The Complete Book of Homeopathy, Michael and Kathleen Goss.

Cy-Thea writes and works in Vancouver. She is a guest editor on the Fireweed collective for their upcoming issue on class.

This is part of a work in progress as Cy-Thea Sand continues to explore homeopathic healing.

HEALTHWISE

Awesome Allium

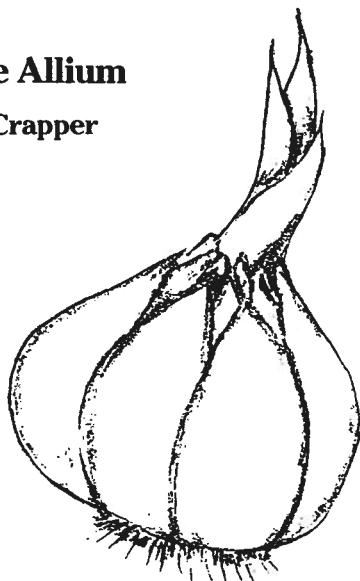
Roberta Crapper

It is comforting for those of us who like a particular food to find out that the treat that we enjoy so much is also good for us. Well, the news is great for garlic lovers: there is lots of evidence to prove that the healing properties of *Allium sativum* (garlic) are stronger than the smell of this favourite vegetable.

Five thousand years of use have created many legends around this natural antibiotic. Protection against vampires, plagues, poisonous plants, and evil spirits are but a few of the safeguards that garlic was considered to offer. During the First World War, garlic was used extensively on wound infections. Even gangrene responded favourably to the application of garlic. Raw garlic juice, diluted with water, was applied externally to the wound. The medicinal factor is created when the clove is cut or crushed and the active ingredient *allicin* (anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory) is formed by the combination of *allin* and the enzyme *allinase*.

Many clinical trials have proven the effectiveness of garlic in reducing high blood pressure and raising low blood pressure. Unlike pharmaceutical preparations that are capable of responding only to one condition or the other, garlic works to balance blood pressure, whether it is high or low. The British medical journal *Lancet* has reported that the normal elevation of cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood that results from eating butter can be lowered if garlic is ingested at the same time.

During a recent lecture in Toronto, Dr. William Crook, author of *The Yeast Connection*, stated that *Candida albicans* cannot survive in the presence of garlic and that garlic is more reliable than the drug Nystatin that is frequently prescribed for this fungus infection. Although infrequently diagnosed, *Candida* can invade any organ



Ida Wellwood

of the body. (See *Healthsharing*, Summer, 1985.) Vaginal yeast overgrowth is the most commonly recognized symptom of this malady and frequently follows the use of antibiotic drugs. Nature's antibiotic, garlic, kills only unfriendly bacteria and leaves the friendly bacteria to continue the fight against invading organisms. The anti-inflammatory characteristics of garlic also make it effective in alleviating pelvic inflammatory disease. For these ailments, raw garlic douches and enemas made with unchlorinated water can be used. (Chlorine, like antibiotic drugs, is impartial about what it kills, killing friendly and unfriendly bacteria.)

A cut clove of garlic placed on an aching tooth will help to relieve the pain. For a sore throat, put a crushed clove in two to four tablespoons of honey with 1/16 teaspoon of cayenne pepper and let it drip slowly down the throat.

Other uses of garlic include the treatment of acne, allergies, anemia, arthritis, athlete's foot, cancer, constipation, diabetes, heavy metal poisoning, insomnia, nicotine poisoning, shellfish poisoning, poisoning from untreated water (Montezuma's revenge) and radiation sickness.

How much garlic is enough? Six cloves of garlic a week is an adult dosage. Because cooking destroys the active ingredient, *allicin*, garlic has to

be eaten raw to be effective. You might want to follow your dose of garlic with some parsley which will reduce the smell of garlic on your breath. If you are concerned about the smell, or if raw garlic upsets your stomach, garlic oil can be purchased in gelatin capsules from most health food stores.

When purchasing garlic for planting, make sure your garlic is disease-free. A reliable herb gardener will be able to advise you on the different varieties of garlic available and the type best suited to your soil.

With a remedy like garlic no further away than your natural food store, the supermarket, or even your own garden, good health doesn't cost, it pays.

Roberta Crapper owns a health food store in rural Ontario and has a keen interest in herbs.

Vaginal Garlic

The following treatments may be used for vaginal bacterial infections such as hemophilus and cervicitis:

1. Vinegar and Garlic

Add two tablespoons white vinegar and oil from one clove of garlic to one quart warm water. Use as a douche, twice a day for three to five days. Garlic oil is available in some supermarkets, or cut five cloves of garlic into fine pieces and cover with one-half cup plus two tablespoons vinegar and let sit all day. Then strain and use two tablespoons of this vinegar in your douche.

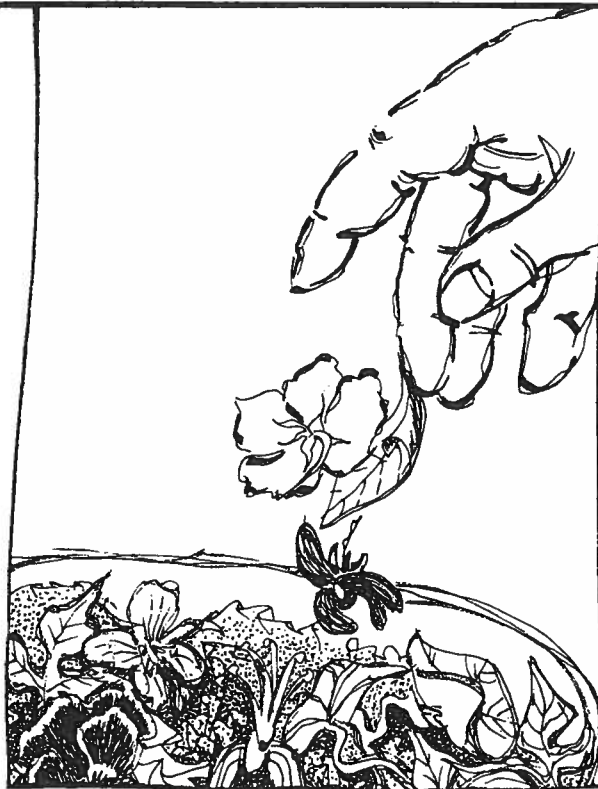
2. Garlic Suppositories

Carefully peel one small clove of garlic (don't nick the garlic or it may burn) and place it at the centre of a piece of gauze, about one foot long and three or four inches wide. Fold the gauze in half and twist it around the garlic, making a kind of tampon with a gauze tail. Now dip the garlic in vegetable oil to make it easier to insert into the vagina. Change every 12 hours for three to five days. Garlic suppositories may be used for trichomonas and yeast as well as for bacterial vaginal infections and cervicitis.

From: *Healing Yourself* by Joy Gardner. (See review in this issue of *Healthsharing*.)

Connie Guberman

Weeds, Wildflowers and Women



Terri Robertson

Shakespeare called the violet Cupid's flower. According to Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it made a powerful love potion:

The juice of it on sleeping eyelids
laid,
Will make a man or woman madly
dote
Upon the next live creature that it
sees.

Violets have been used medicinally for centuries. The Greeks used leaf poultices to ease burning stomachs and inflamed eyes, the Romans made violet wine, and more recently, the syrup of violets has been prescribed to soothe asthma and bronchial coughs.

Violets, pansies, daisies, marigolds and roses are breathtaking to behold in any garden or cut in a vase, yet each flower should be admired for its culinary delights as well as for its beauty and fragrance. They should be prized for their nutritional use in teas, salads and as vegetable greens as well as for their ornamental loveliness.

The plants I've chosen to describe are the ones that are common to most of us. Readers don't have to be gardeners or cooks to use these plants. All of these grow wild and many can be eaten raw.

It's best to pick flowers early in the

day when they are fresh and the dew has just dried. Always handle them carefully then lightly pat them dry with paper towels. Keep them in a closed bag in the refrigerator until you're ready to use them. If they've drooped a bit they can be refreshed by dipping in icy water.

The leaves and flowers of pansies, johnny-jump-ups and other relatives of the violet family (*Violet specialis*) are so rich in vitamins C and A that they have been called "nature's vitamin pill" by Euell Gibbons in *Stalking the Healthful Herbs*. In fact, violet leaves and petals, weight-for-weight, are three times as rich in vitamin C as oranges. Violets have 210 milligrams of vitamin C per 100 grams, and they have no calories.

The velvety texture and fabulous range of colours and "faces" in pansies will transform any salad, and the petals are superb with steamed rice.

The hardy perennial columbine, also known as aquilegia or Granny's Bonnet, was the flower of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. It bears beautifully coloured flowers from May to July, grows wild throughout North America and thrives well in ordinary garden soil. It is easy to propagate from seed and grows well in partial shade. And it tastes very much like snow peas when steamed. The young leaves are also

nutritious eaten raw.

One folk legend claims that since lions feed on columbine flowers, rubbing the petals will give you lion-like courage. But the columbine isn't a very good neighbour — it attracts red spiders which eat away at many flowers and vegetables.

The common marigold was so precious in ancient Mexico that it was sacred to the goddess of agriculture. She believed it was good for everything in the garden. And today gardeners know that marigolds are a useful companion plant. Its roots produce a chemical which, when released in the soil, kills nematodes — a common garden pest attacking potatoes, strawberries, roses, tomatoes, beans and flower bulbs.

A tea of marigold petals is full of calcium and potassium, and works as a mild laxative. To prepare steep two teaspoons of marigold petals in two cups of boiling water until the liquid is a rich yellow. Strain, add honey and lemon to taste. A cup of this brew several times a day does wonders for the system.

Marigolds contain bitters as well as a colouring substance called calendulin which is like carotin. The intense orange and yellow petals, fresh or dried, can be used in salads, omelettes, buns and muffins. (I grind the dried petals

and use the powder as a substitute for saffron.)

The piquant leaves, petals, buds and seeds of nasturtiums are also rich in vitamin C and are an excellent substitute for pepper. This annual may appear delicate, but don't overindulge. Limit your daily intake to under one ounce.

Any rose (*Rosa specialis*), wild or cultivated, can be used in salad, either alone or mixed with other flowers. And the fruit of the rose — the vitamins E and C-rich rose hip — is often brewed for a relaxing tea. The *Rosa rugosa*, or shrub rose produces some of the largest hips.

In his newly published *Harrow-smith Illustrated Book of Herbs* Patrick Lima recommends picking rose hips when they are plump and red, not soft and overripe, trimming the stem and blossom end, cutting the hips in half, scooping out the seeds, and drying the halves in an airy, shady spot. The dried rose hips should be hard like coffee beans. To make tea, grind a handful or so, and steep for 10 minutes. Other flowers and herbs, dry or fresh, can be added for flavour.

The leaves of strawberry plants (*Fregaria specialis*) are even richer in vitamin C than rose hips. The plants are usually ignored when there are no berries to be picked, but a tea of strawberry leaves is a natural laxative, diuretic and astringent. The boiled roots and leaves make a soothing gargle for sore mouths and gums.

Raspberry leaves (*Rubus specialis*) contain calcium fluoride, a salt that encourages tissue elasticity throughout the body. Tea made by steeping two teaspoons of leaves in two cups of boiling water for five minutes is terrific for easing menstrual cramps and morning sickness.

The strawberry and raspberry plants are members of the rose family which includes almost 2,000 species of trees, shrubs and herbs. Some of the loveliest flowers and most valuable fruits belong to it: apple, apricot, cherry, blackberry, dewberry, peach, pear and plum.

Both the cultivated pink, red and white daisies and the wild ox-eye (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*) are full of calcium. The daisy is related to chamomile and can be brewed to make a calming tea.

A daisy sister, *Chrysanthemum*

cinerariifolium, more commonly known as pyrethrum, is a deadly natural insecticide. It kills bugs yet is safe for humans and warm-blooded animals. Pick *Chrysanthemum cinerariifolium* flower heads when two or three outer rows of petals have opened in the central yellow discs. Pick only blossoms, not stems. Dry the flower heads in the sun or in the oven set at the lowest temperature, then grind into a powder. Put 10 grams of powder (less than 1/3 ounce) in a lightproof bottle and add four ounces of denatured alcohol. Shake the mixture occasionally and let it stand for 24 hours at room temperature. Pour this finished mixture through a coffee maker filter and spray it with an atomizer or spray bottle. This recipe makes about a 0.1 per cent solution but its effect is much stronger since the alcohol evaporates almost immediately.

Valuable dandelions are usually treated as disgraceful weeds in the garden. But this tenacious weed contains more vitamin C than lettuce, more iron than spinach, is full of potassium, calcium, and magnesium, and it has only 45 calories per 100 grams.

The entire plant — roots, leaves, buds and flowers — is believed to have medicinal properties useful for liver and kidney problems, jaundice and rheumatic conditions. It stimulates the digestive glands, the gall-bladder and pancreas.

The unopened spring buds are delicious stir-fried with leeks, butter, salt and pepper. The roots can be ground, roasted lightly and brewed as a caffeine-free coffee substitute. The tender young leaves can be picked any time between April and September and are most tender when the plant is in flower. The greens can be added to a salad, pureed like spinach, or pressed to make juice.

While dandelion salad is a highly efficient blood cleanser due to its slightly diuretic and digestive qualities, dandelion wine is a truly beneficial tonic. Mrs. Beeton's recipe from *The Book of Household Management* (1907 edition) seems to be the standard:

Ingredients: 4 quarts of dandelion flowers, 4 quarts of boiling water, 3 lbs. of sugar, 1 inch of whole ginger, 1 lemon, the thinly pared rind of 1 orange, 1 tbsp. of brewers yeast moistened with water.



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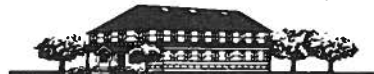
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Method: Put the petals into a bowl, pour the boiling water over them, let the bowl remain standing and covered for 3 days, stirring frequently. Strain the liquid into a pan, add the sliced rinds of orange and lemon, the sugar and the ginger.

Boil gently for about 1/2 hour, and when cool, add the yeast. Allow to stand for 2 days, then turn into a bottle or cask, keep it well bunged down for 8 or 9 weeks. Then bottle it. (I leave out most of the sugar and add honey to taste.)



Most of us avoid stinging nettle because of its coarse tiny stinging hairs that cause a rash. (The hairs contain acetylcholine and histamines.) Yet it, like the dandelion, is high in vitamins A and C, phosphates, calcium, magnesium, organic iron and protein. The hairs gently float off when blanched in boiling water. Nettle is bland when cooked, so it needs some seasoning.

The young leaves (they should be picked before the plant is a foot high) have special curative values and increase blood flow. A strong nettle tea is good for internal bleeding and bronchitis.

The stinging nettle plant is a rich soil builder as it has a carbon-nitrogen ratio similar to barnyard manure. When put in the compost heap it creates heat almost immediately.

Including weeds in the compost adds a plentiful source of trace elements and minerals. Nettles and dandelions are both greedy feeders and rob the soil of fertility but through composting, these nutrients are eventually returned to the soil. Experienced gardeners tell me that no area is better for

planting a soft-fruit tree than an old nettle-bed that has enriched the soil with its own compost.

An effective black fly repellant can be made simply by soaking some stinging nettles in a bucket of rainwater for a couple of weeks. Strain, then spray.

Red clover, plantain, Queen Anne's lace and lamb's quarters are all commonly found in roadside ditches and empty city lots. But each has a hidden richness.

Red clover tea, made by steeping the flower heads, is an old remedy for whooping cough. The flowers are also edible both raw and cooked. And red clover is extremely valuable as a green manure — a cover crop which prevents erosion from winter winds, storms and quick frosts by blanketing the soil surfaces of gardens and fields. These plants keep the soil warmer in winter and cooler in summer.

Plantain, when picked and eaten raw, tastes like Romain lettuce and the tea has a diuretic effect. This hardy weed contains the blood-clotting factor vitamin K. The juice from crushed plantain leaves provides quick relief from wasp stings, bites of any kind, and can stop minor cuts and scrapes from bleeding.

Lamb's quarters, also known as fat hen or pigweed, is an enduring and annoying annual weed that shows up in spring. The young shoots, however, are richer in vitamins A and C than spinach, and it is the richest source of calcium among the green leafy vegetables. Lamb's quarters tastes like asparagus when steamed.

Queen Anne's lace with its tiny white umbels of flowers is related to the wild carrot, and while its roots are not edible, its seeds make a great substitute for anise or caraway seeds.

Weeds and flowers have been neglected as nutrients since we've been conditioned to accept cultivated, processed and packaged food. Wild plants in backyards, roadside ditches, empty lots, against buildings — anywhere they're not expected — should not be considered interlopers or invaders. We need to look at them in a new light — as our nutritious and useful friends.

Connie Guberman teaches Women's Studies and grows 27 different herbs in her tiny backyard garden.

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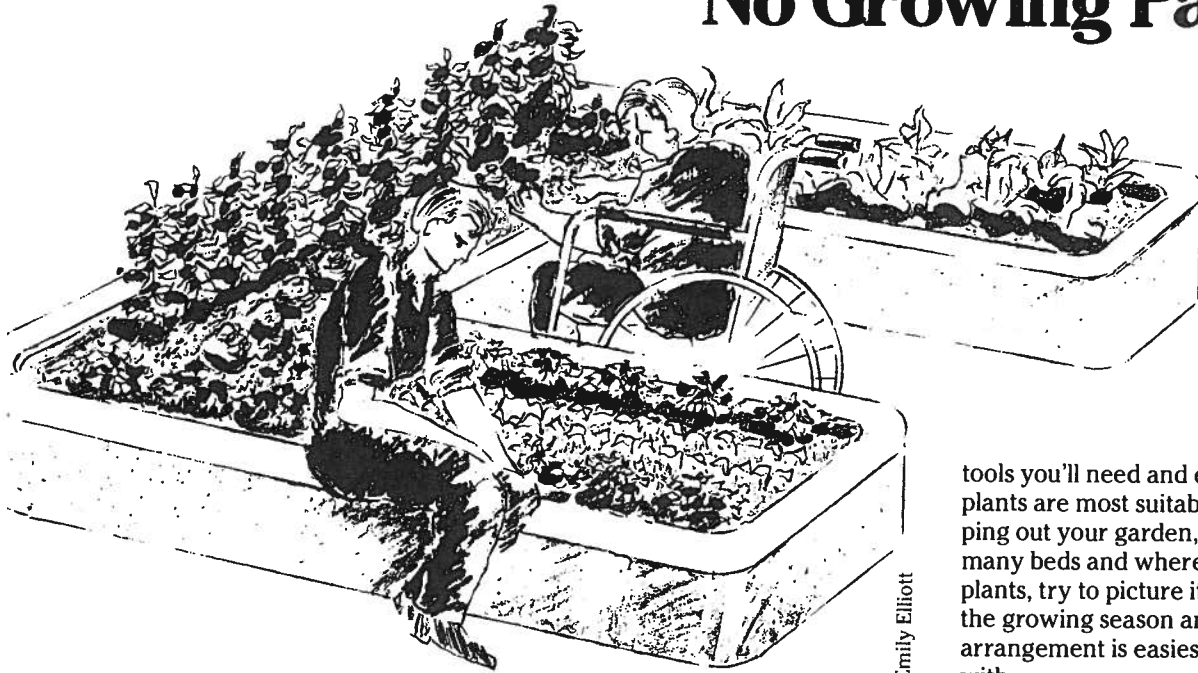
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Barbara Lamb

No Growing Pains



L. Emily Elliott

It may surprise some people to learn that the most popular outdoor leisure activity in North America is gardening. From the flower box tender to the backyard farmer, advocates of gardening enjoy both relaxation and the sense of peace that comes from direct interaction with nature. However, gardening is not totally leisurely and the initial enthusiasm with which we approach it can easily be dissipated by the strenuous work involved. All too often the venture can turn into one long unpleasant chore rather than an act of regeneration. My own early attempts at caring for a plot of land were so painful that I almost nipped my love of plants in the bud. Fortunately, I persevered and from the experience I learned to combine my love of gardening with healthy gardening techniques.

There is no way to reap a harvest without work, but it is possible to make the work enjoyable. I've talked with many gardeners over the years and I've found that often the elderly or disabled have the most sensible approach. Books and articles written for these gardeners contain thoughtful tips on tools, accessibility, labour sav-

ing techniques and often include small-scale projects which can give new gardeners a sense of mastery and accomplishment.

Thorough planning is a prerequisite for reducing the potential drudgery of gardening. During the long, dreary winter months most gardeners pore over seed catalogues and draw maps of their plots, imagining the wonderful sight of rows of colourful, healthy plants. However, the most important planning involves stepping back and looking at yourself. Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses. Note any physical limitations that may affect the way you garden. Then realistically estimate how much time you'll have available. In February it's difficult to imagine anything more lovely than dirt under your fingernails, but in mid-July, when weeds are everywhere, there will undoubtedly be a hundred other things you'd rather be doing.

Being aware of your physical limitations and time constraints allows you to plant a garden based on your own interests and needs. Knowing what you can reasonably accomplish should help you determine how to arrange your garden, what kinds of

tools you'll need and even which plants are most suitable. When mapping out your garden, deciding how many beds and where to put different plants, try to picture it at the height of the growing season and decide which arrangement is easiest for you to work with.

For wheelchair gardeners and those with reduced mobility, raised beds are an option that brings the plants within reach, particularly if the bed is built in a W-shape. For gardeners who use canes or walkers, or who need to rest frequently while working, the wide ledge on a raised bed provides a place to sit while working.

Container gardening is another solution for less mobile women. Large barrels, crates and chimney flues make good containers for plants that prefer a small living space like cherry tomatoes, herbs and leafy greens. Using a soil-less planting mix and attaching caster wheels make the containers light and easier to move around. Many vegetables such as lettuce, bush beans and short carrots can be grown in a window box next to your petunias. There are even some varieties that can be grown in hanging baskets. As well as being more accessible, vegetables grown in this way save space and are ideal for apartment dwellers. Remember that plants grown in containers will have an increased need for moisture and nutrients, so water and feed accordingly.

Women who have difficulty bending may decide to concentrate on pole beans, peas, cucumber, squash and

tomatoes, all of which can be trained up trellises or stakes. Let the plant come up to your level instead of bending down to it! Recycle old nets, bamboo poles, chicken wire or even bicycle wheels mounted on a wall for supports. Try spaghetti squash or scarlet runner beans along an existing fence this spring, instead of the usual flowers. As well as giving plants something to climb up, sturdy posts and poles placed around the garden offer support for anyone with poor balance.

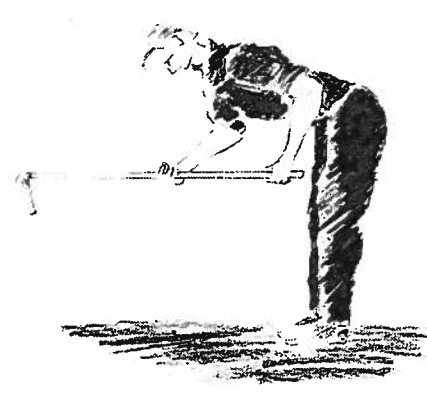
Gardening with reduced vision will be most successful with an easily laid out garden, perhaps keeping the same plan year after year. Good plant choices are larger vegetables such as melons or squash, and brightly coloured varieties like red peppers and purple beans.

If you have very fair skin, are bothered by glare or are taking medication which increases photosensitivity, you may wish to incorporate some strategies for coping with the sun in your planning. You could plant your own garden closer to the trees or build a small arbour to create a shady area. Leaving an umbrella near the garden is also a good idea.

Once you've planned your garden arrangement and crops, visualize the next stages of gardening. Preparing the soil, planting, weeding and harvesting all require many different physical activities. At times you need to reach, at other times bend. Weeding requires better eyesight than digging. By indulging in a little fantasy, you foresee potential problems and give yourself a chance to solve them by researching special tools or even making your own. This way you won't be out in your backyard in May, borrowed shovel in hand, thinking, "Oh, this is going to wreck my back!"

Preparing the soil requires the most tools and it's always a good idea to look at a number of different ones before making your choices. Don't be shy about approaching other gardeners for their advice — they're usually more than willing to share their experience. Good quality tools can often be found at auctions and garage sales but before buying any tool, handle it first. Feel how it sits in your hand. Go through a few motions like digging or hoeing. If the tool doesn't feel comfortable, don't buy it because chances are you won't use it.

Women with special needs may require special tools. For those with back problems, lightweight aluminum tools are easier to use. Long handled tools can be used from a sitting position. There are some power tillers which are especially light and easier to handle. One-handed wheelbarrows leave your other hand free — useful if you need to use a cane or hang onto a fence for support and two-wheeled garden carts are more manageable than conventional wheelbarrows.



Digging Hoe — incorrect

With a little ingenuity, standard tools can also be improved to suit your own needs. For example, a wooden handle that is too wide can be sanded down to size until your two middle fingers come all the way to your palm when wrapped around it. When a handle is too big, the wrist tires very quickly. From my own experience I discovered the problem of tools loosening is easily solved. The head of my pitchfork kept falling off in the heavy clay soil of my garden so I borrowed a drill and put a hole through it and bolted it to the shaft. It will never come off now! Using a drill you can also attach short lengths of wood to the shaft of a tool, thus providing another handle for greater stability. Tool handles can be made more comfortable by padding them with pieces of foam rubber pipe wrap from a plumbing supply store or handle bar grips from a bicycle shop.

Many tools can be adapted from what you have around the house. One woman is a wizard with half-gallon bleach bottles. She cuts the top off and then straps the jug to her waist with a belt. This gives her a container for carrying seeds or string and leaves her hands free. Over-turned bottles are used to protect tender seedlings from

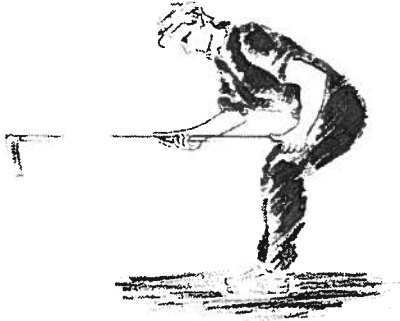
frost, and another bottle cut on the bias makes a good trowel. Trowels can be made from many household objects, including plastic cups, tin cans and flour scoops.

Preparing the soil in your garden is probably the most strenuous of garden tasks. This is especially true if you are breaking new ground or working in a heavy clay soil. The two places most vulnerable to misuse in the human body are the lower back and the wrists, and after a winter of relative inactivity you can easily strain yourself those first days in the garden. A modest exercise program, begun in the winter or early spring, can save you a lot of pain and frustration later. Once you get into the garden, make sure you do some gentle stretching before, during and after heavy work. Start slowly, and don't try to turn over your entire plot in one day. Work on the section you need first, for instance the bed for such early crops as peas, spinach or beets.

Ideally, when the head of a long-handled tool rests on the ground, the knob at the top of the handle should be no lower than your shoulder, and it is better if it reaches to your nose. When you dig, you then have enough handle to keep from stooping. When using a long handled shovel or digging hoe, be sure to bend your knees and take the strain on your legs rather than your back. This position brings the hoe closer to the body and requires less work from the back muscles. Rest your left arm along your thigh or knee so that the hoe can be brought down by a little bounce in the knees, and resist the temptation to look up which strains the neck. Switch the tool from hand to hand to distribute the load on your muscles. You can also dig your garden from a sitting position, on an overturned milk crate or on the ground. In this position it is better to dig with a trowel. The process may take a little longer, but your back will thank you for it.

The next step after preparing the soil is planting. Planting seeds can be difficult for those with stiff fingers or reduced vision, and all of us have experienced the frustration of having to thin healthy young seedlings or seeing empty gaps in the row. There are a number of products to make planting easier. Seed tapes or pellets ensure the proper spacing of seeds.

Fluid sowing involves mixing the seeds with a special gel that contains nutrients for the young plants. An alternative to these often expensive solutions is to make your own fluid sowing system by mixing the seed into a flour and water paste. Put the paste into an icing tube or a heavy plastic bag with a cut corner and then squeeze the paste into the row. Its a good idea to experiment a bit to get the proper spacing of seeds.



Digging Hoe — correct

Some will find it easier to plant large seeds like peas, beans or squash. Besides being easier to see and handle, seeds of this size can be planted without bending. First use a long stick to make a hole, then drop the seed in through a plastic pipe. Once the seed is in place, using a shovel or the toe of your shoe, cover it with soil and lightly tap it down. Small seeds which can be troublesome for arthritic fingers can be sown from a pepper shaker. One gardener has coloured lines drawn on her trowel which correspond to different planting depths. She inserts the blade at the proper depth, angles it to push the soil aside and then drops the seed in. You can also avoid seeds altogether. In the vegetable garden plant onion sets, potatoe eyes or Jerusalem artichoke tubers or purchase seedlings from a nursery. In the flower garden concentrate on bulbs such as tulips, daffodils or gladioli. Berry bushes and fruit trees are another alternative, and don't forget, many flowers and plants for both indoor and outdoor gardens can be propagated from cuttings.

Weeding is the next task in the garden and for many gardeners it is the least pleasant. Try to keep ahead of the job by doing a little weeding every day. Many weeds such as purslane, dandelion and lamb's quarters are delicious in a salad, and all weeds produce compost. When weeding try

to kneel rather than bend. A board with a towel wrapped around it can provide a cushion for your knees. A long handled hoe allows weeding from a standing position. The handle of a weeding hoe should be at least shoulder height, and even taller if it is a Dutch push hoe. A short crosspiece at the knob end will enable you to grip it with your wrists straight, avoiding strain. Try not to extend the hoe more than two feet from your body and keep your back straight. It is better to step closer than to bend and strain your back as you struggle to reach that last offending weed!

Harvesting is the happiest of gardening tasks. Like weeding, it is a job best done each day to ensure maximum freshness and to space the work out. Try to pick from a sitting position if your vegetables are close to the ground. If you're harvesting from trellises or fruit trees, put a large handbag over your shoulder so you don't need to bend down. If you have to carry your harvest any distance, a two-wheeled grocery cart will take the strain off your back.

Measy! Find your own rhythm of work and rest in the garden. In the long run you'll be more productive and at peace with your patch of ground. Saving all your digging or weeding for one mammoth day of work only leads to a sore back and a hefty load of resentment. Try to space big jobs over a period of time and don't be afraid to ask for help. Most of your friends will be glad to lend a hand in return for a basket of fruit, some freshly cut flowers or a vine-ripened tomato. Lots of people who don't have gardens of their own enjoy the chance to feel the earth on their hands. And finally, get a seat even if its only an overturned bucket and use it! Sit down in your garden and recollect your strength. You'll be able to smell the soil, listen to the birds and rather than think of chores still waiting, you can revel in what you've already accomplished. Here's to a harvest of peace and plenty!

Barbara Lamb is a birth control counsellor. She loves gardening in her large plot rented from the City of Toronto.

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REVIEWS



Much Depends On Dinner

Margaret Visser, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1986, \$24.95, 350 pp.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Amer

Margaret Visser is the woman with the melodious accent (she's from Zambia) who talks on CBC Radio's *Morningside* about ordinary things like parades, twins, hair, vacations, and gift giving. She is fascinated by what she calls "the anthropology of everyday life." The *Morningside* mail suggests that she is enormously but not universally popular. Her producer reports that some listeners complain that she tells them more than they want to know; an academic colleague, (Visser is a York University classicist), carped in a letter that she ought not to be making light of the serious discipline of anthropology. If it is wrong to be amusing about serious matter then Visser is a malefactor.

"The extraordinary history and mythology, allure and obsessions, perils and taboos of an ordinary meal" announces the book's subtitle. The meal itself is simple enough for a small child: corn with salt and butter, chicken, rice, lettuce with olive oil and lemon and ice cream. As we tuck expectantly into each chapter we are rewarded with sustaining thought leavened by tasty trivia.

About corn, for example, we learn that granola was invented by the same Will Kellogg who created corn flakes and who also pioneered rhetorical excess in advertising. (I have dined out shamelessly on such tidbits since I first encountered *Much Depends On Dinner*.) Salt: Roman soldiers received a measure of salt as part of their pay, hence, "salary." Butter: Europeans were *bata kusai* or "butter-stinkers" to the fastidious, oil-eating, Japanese. Chicken: "In ancient Greece a cock was a gift with specific sexual connotations from an older male to a young boy. The cock expressed the sheer maleness of the couple, their virile aggressivity and energy." Rice: The discovery of alcohol is an inevitable result of a society's switch from a staple diet of roots to one of grains. Lettuce: "Pithylos, The Food-Fixated," kept his tongue in a bag between meals to preserve its sensitivity. Olive oil: The olive tree, once used in folk cures, is now known to contain salicylic acid, the active ingredient in Aspirin. Lemon: Manufacturers of the Citroen automobile do not emphasize that the car's name means lemon. Ice cream: In 1578, the Turkish Pasha Muhammad received an income of 80,000 *sequins* for his ice mines.

Like her radio talks, Visser's book is refreshing in its womanliness. She does not write about daring forays into the world outside but rather about the search for the lost meaning of things so taken for granted that we no

longer understand their power.

Visser believes that "food always symbolically underpins societal categories. For example, in the 19th century the mythology of foods reinforced male and female roles in society . . . The cock crows and people listen. Societies used this story as conclusive proof that public eloquence was a quintessentially male virtue. The hen's modest cluck showed that women should keep their words short and low and attend to domestic concerns . . . The hen took refuse and turned it into gold. She was a modest, hard-working and submissive wife, as irreproachably fecund and maternally devoted as she was thrifty. She was the model for 19th century protestant womanhood." Among the hens, too, there was a pecking order but "cocks easily rule over all hens; it is a very sorry specimen of rooster that allows himself to be hen-pecked."

Now, this once pervasive fowl hierarchy has been overruled by modern factory farming methods which make all sexes slaves. It is clear that Margaret Visser deplores this model and hopes that it does not prophesy "what contemporary humans are prepared to force on others to satisfy what they perceive to be their needs."

In her introduction the writer explains that she set out to write a book that was primarily "amusing," often, however, she wrote in "outrage and fear." Reading the book is like watching wildlife programs on public television. The documentary is utterly fascinating but at the end of the hour the narrator intones that, alas, if industrial man doesn't stop what he's doing to the tribe, bird, mammal, plant, swamp, forest, etc., in the interest of profit, all will be irrevocably lost and that possibly it is already too late.

Visser, with more passion and less forced objectivity, regrets the passing of what was once an unimaginably rich and varied pool of species. The reader is bereft and wondering where to send her cheque and wanting to know who will organize a meeting about the destruction of the homeland.

Visser's energetic voice and her celebration of everyday things offers hope.

Elizabeth Amer is a Toronto writer and editor. She is a member of Women Healthsharing.

Healing Yourself

Joy Gardner, *The Crossing Press*, Trumansburg, N.Y., 1982, \$8.95, paper, 63 pp.

A Difficult Decision: A Compassionate Book About Abortion

Joy Gardner, *The Crossing Press*, Trumansburg, N.Y., 1986, \$9.95, paper, 115 pp.

Reviewed by Judi Pustil

Joy Gardner is a holistic counsellor in Nelson, B.C. who has worked with herbs related to many aspects of healing. Her experience reaches into pregnancy, birth, self and family health care, abortion, miscarriage, and death and loss.

Being a midwife and very involved in bodywork and counselling, I was drawn to the first of these two books — *Healing Yourself* — many years ago. It is a beautiful little book, that contains a wealth of knowledge that used to be carried from hand to hand, woman to woman, family to family. Sadly, we have lost touch with much of this wisdom and Gardner provides us with an invaluable way back to it.

Healing Yourself details the use of home and herbal remedies, and vitamins for most common ailments we are likely to need help with in our families — from earaches to skin disorders to problems related to pregnancy. It is simply and responsibly written: an unpretentious book of prevention and treatment. It also has a comprehensive section on vitamins and the effects of the lack of them in our diet. A great book to have at your fingertips — I have referred to it time and time again over the years.

Healing the Family, the sequel to this book is also full of important healing information, although I must admit I use *Healing Yourself* more often because it is smaller and the information I need is easier to find. *Healing the Family* is currently out of print, although Gardner has nearly completed an updated version of it entitled, *Healing Yourself During Pregnancy*, which will be available in fall, 1987.

Her new book, *A Difficult Decision*, is full of compassion and caring. There's much good practical down-to-earth information about the actual

processes and procedures of medical abortions. It brings many aspects of the abortion issue forward for examination and discussion. It addresses how complex abortion is. That it is not simple and straightforward. That even though often it is the right decision, it is almost always a difficult one, with many unresolved feelings which need our attention and love.

The political controversy — pro-choice versus anti-choice — has created a dead-end situation that forces many women to feel that because they have chosen an abortion they must feel OK about it and ignore their true inner feelings. Gardner's book offers a lot of support and space for acknowledging and dealing with our deepest feelings about abortion.

One of Gardner's fortes as a death and loss counsellor is her ability to guide visualizations in facilitating the healing process. There are some truly lovely ones in this book. I welcome her acknowledgment of the whole spiritual realm of abortion, and her wisdom in dealing with abortion as a death — because for most women it is. These two aspects of abortion have been ignored for too long. I appreciate Gardner's suggestion to do some kind of ritual afterward. In my experience the women (and men) who have honoured this event, in all its sorrow and difficulty, with a ceremony of whatever kind, have felt more at peace.

Gardner wrote another book about abortion before a *Difficult Decision*. It was entitled *Abortion: A Personal Approach*. This book is now out of print. Her focus then was slightly different, but the content was essentially the same. A significant difference

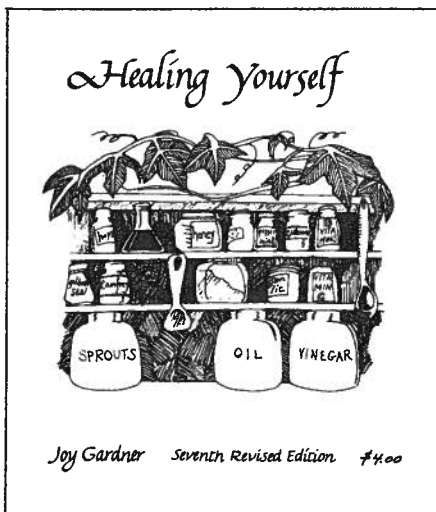
however, is that the first book contained home remedy abortifacients which are not in the new book. In the second book, she says, "I prefer to encourage the use of early pregnancy tests, good counselling, a thoughtful decision and, when appropriate, an early vacuum abortion."

I must admit that I have a conflict about printing the abortifacients in a book. On the one hand, we as women have the right to information and need to find our way back to some of this ancient knowledge. When conscientiously followed, herbal remedies can prevent more harmful forms of abortion. On the other hand, as Gardner herself clearly states, these herbs can be harmful if not used properly. She writes responsibly and gives extensive warnings about not using the remedies if there is any chance that a woman may want to keep the baby. Not enough research has been done to establish what effects there will be on a fetus if the attempted abortion does not occur and the mother decides to keep her baby. My mind is rolling. It is very complex!

A book — any book — cannot provide the true support that is needed. Ideally, women need and deserve continuous care from someone who is knowledgeable and nonjudgmental to listen and counsel them right from the start; someone to walk through the process with them each step of the way and also afterwards. For this reason, omitting the remedies from the second book was a positive choice.

I respect and honour the courage and honesty put into writing all these books. In particular it is heartwarming to have a book on abortion. The emotional aspects have been closeted for too long, with the notable exception of Kathleen McDonnell's important and sensitive book *Not An Easy Choice*. We as women need to bring abortion out into the open to be able to truly heal ourselves.

Judi Pustil is a midwife (though not actively practising just now) and child-birth educator. She lives in magnificent Nelson, British Columbia with her children Celia and Micah and is currently doing bodywork, counselling and writing.



RESOURCES & EVENTS

Reproductive Technologies

But What Will They Mean for Women? Feminist Concerns about the New Reproductive Technologies by Linda S. Williams, is an overview of the feminist response to new reproductive technologies and how they undermine women's control over their reproductive lives.

Order from Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 151 Slater St., Ottawa, Ont. K1P 5H3. (613) 563-0681. Price is \$2.50 each.

Reproductive Hazards

The Women Working group of Windsor Occupational Safety & Health (WOSH) has produced a new booklet entitled *Reproductive Hazards: Are You at Risk?* It is a simply written, inexpensively produced booklet about work hazards, discrimination against women in employment settings and specific information about known chemical hazards.

Cost is \$4.00 (individuals and unions) or \$6.00 (institutions & businesses) per copy. Order from WOSH/Women Working, 1109 Tecumseh Rd. E., Windsor, Ont. N2W 1B3 (519) 254-4192.

Community Health Centres

The Community Health Co-operative Federation is sponsoring a national conference on Community Health Centres — Requirements for Growth. The conference will examine the obstacles and opportunities for health centres, and will discuss policy and strategies for the future. Existing Canadian Health Centres and their programs will also be examined.

The conference will be held in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, June 10, 11 and 12, 1987. For more information, contact The Co-operative Health Centre, 110 — 8th St. E., Prince Albert, Sask. S6V 0V7.

Promoting Women's Health

Positive Approaches to Promoting Women's Health, a World Health Organization (WHO) publication, argues that social models of health must include the centrality of sex and gender in all aspects of health, illness and curing. Using this criteria, education and promotion programs are assessed, and future strategies are suggested.

Order from the Canadian Public Health Association, 1335 Carling Ave., Suite 210, Ottawa, Ont. K12 8N8.

Smart Cooking

This is a new cookbook published by Macmillan of Canada in co-operation with the Canadian Cancer Society. The recipes in *Smart Cooking* take into account the society's nutritional recommendations which include eating less fat, more fibre, green vegetables and fresh fruit.

If bought through the cancer society, proceeds support the society's programs. The book can be obtained from your local Canadian Cancer Society for \$14.95.

Nurses for Social Responsibility

Nurses for Social Responsibility meet on a monthly basis to discuss and organize around issues of advocacy, education, and to implement strategies for change on social, sexual, racial, economic, peace and justice issues.

The group publishes a newsletter available from: Nurses for Social Responsibility, 13-550 Ontario St., Toronto, Ont. M4X 1X3.

After Sexual Assault

... after sexual assault ... *Your guide to the criminal justice system*, a project of the Policy, Programs and Research Branch provides victims of sexual assault with information about the justice system in Canada. It includes sections on police investigation, the law, preparing for trial, getting financial compensation, definitions of legal terms, etc.

To order or for more information contact: Communications and Public Affairs, Department of Justice Canada, Ottawa K1A 0H8. (613) 995-2569.

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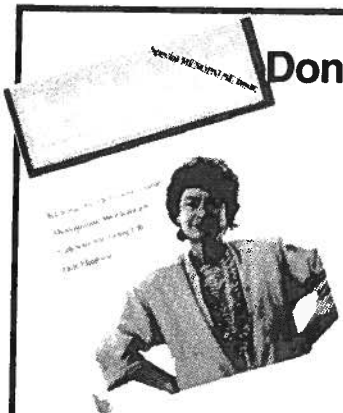
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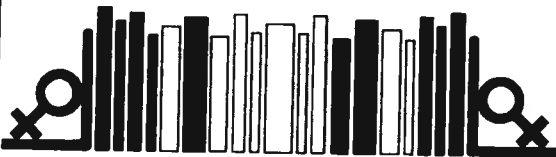
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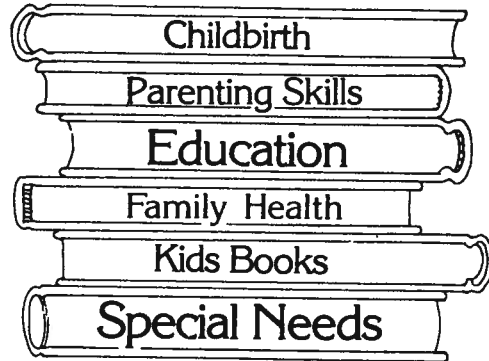
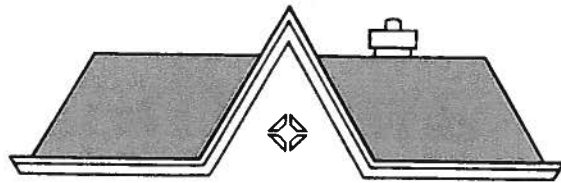
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- They're produced (written, edited, photographed, illustrated) by Canadians, and thus carry information about us and present our point of view.
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